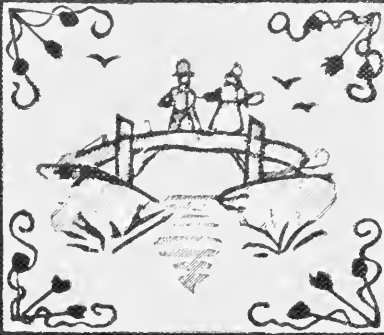


Kitwyk

Stories





Amy Stuart
Meadowbank.

KITWYK STORIES



THE WOMAN WHO SITS IN THE CHAIR IS THE

KITWYK STORIES

BY

ANNA EICHBERG KING

AUTHOR OF "BROWN'S RETREAT, AND OTHER STORIES"



NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.

1895

TO

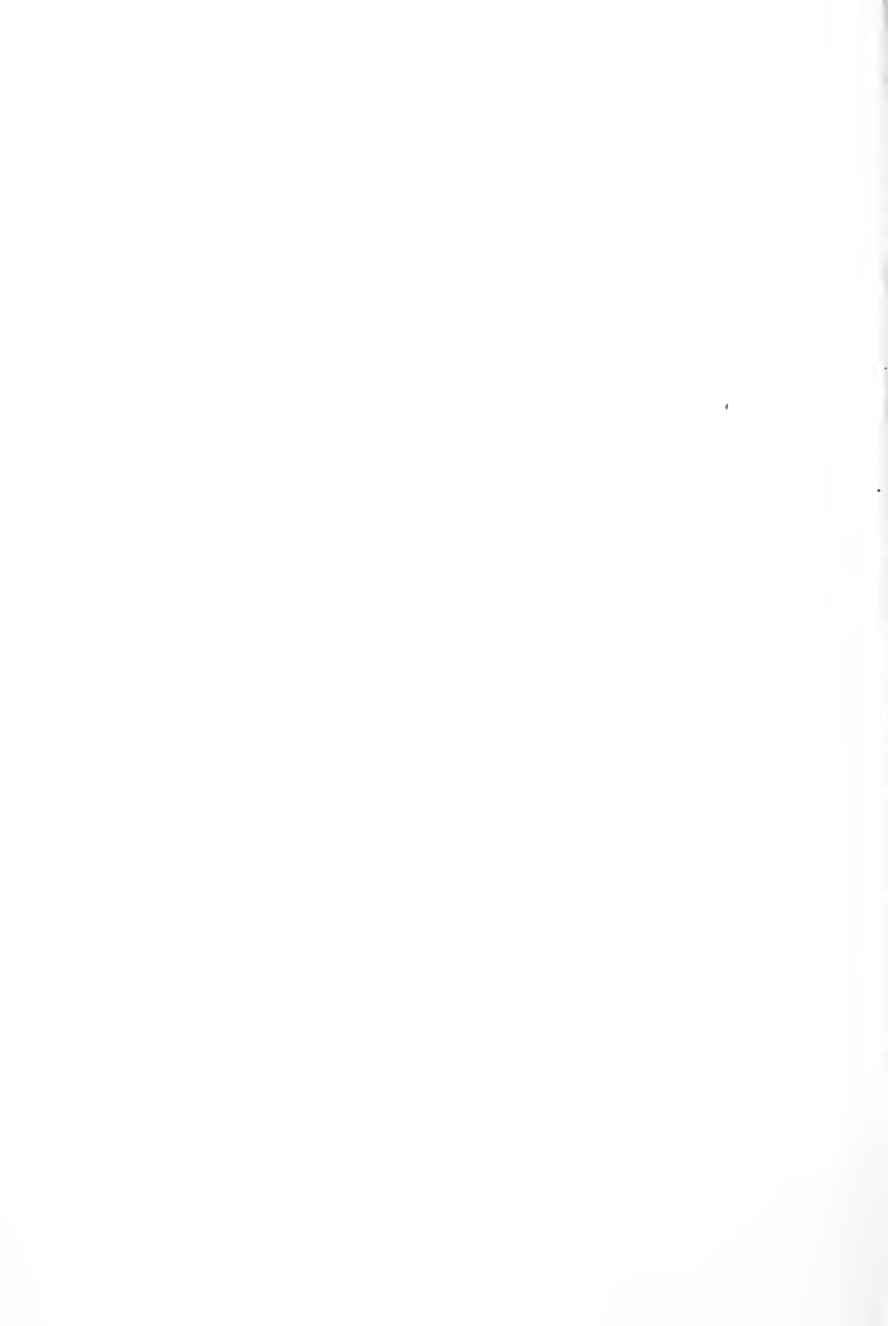
JULIUS EICHBERG

WHOSE RARE WIT AND CHARM WERE AN
INSPIRATION, THESE STORIES ARE DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY BY HIS DAUGHTER

1970

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KITWYK STORIES

THE COURTING OF JUFFROUW VAN LOO

I

IN the outskirts of Kitwyk stood the castle of Ten Brink, an old ruin built on three sides of a quadrangle, and surrounded by a moat covered with a bright green scum and lily-pads, and agitated by nothing more warlike than a family of ducks floating about, while bullfrogs, like a hidden orchestra, kept up a lively bass. Ruin and blight had fallen on Ten Brink; its stone steps were sunken and crumbling, grass grew between the cracks, while the crest of the noble family of Ten Brink over the main entrance was wiped out by time and disaster.

The windows in the state apartments were broken, while the planks that boarded up others were hanging by a few nails, and with the exception of bats at night nothing broke the silence except the occasional flap of Juffrouw de Kock's washing hung up to dry in the forsaken banquetting-hall. The three weather-

cocks that capped the three wings, from which the dull red tiles fell with a melancholy thud, had a discouraged ignoring of the changes in the wind, as if the rust of centuries held them fast by the legs. On a metal vane a forgotten artisan had cut the date—1520.

The castle of Ten Brink had been deserted for three centuries when one day it was invaded by the mother of Juffrouw de Kock, who took possession of the silence, and marked her advent by paint, and an unsparing use of the mop. A green front door replaced a battered oaken structure, and a stern hand hid with a solid layer of white paint the gloomy wood-carvings of the stairs that led to the forsaken banqueting-room. The tower chamber, a kind of huge anteroom where once men-at-arms loafed and dined, had been converted from the errors of its way by the same useful fluid.

It was a great circular space lighted by five windows, and so thick were the walls that each window in its embrasure formed a room by itself. The main room was the kitchen, where stood the great hearth, with a chintz frill about the high chimney, and capped by a row of delft plates. The tea-kettle on its

brass brazier stood beside Juffrouw de Kock's chair, and moved with her from window to window, until the fifth, which she reached by sunset. There she read her Bible, and watched the great red sun sink behind the Kitwyk mill, the barges floating lazily down the canals with flapping sails, and the *trek-schuits* trundling heavily in the rear.

By what right the De Kocks had invaded Ten Brink no one ever knew, and Kitwyk was bewildered by an uncertainty whether to consider them aristocratic by reason of their being the illegal representatives of the race of Ten Brink, or whether to despise them because of their inability to live anywhere else by reason of their poverty.

One spring day, forty years before, Overste (Captain) de Kock—he was not Overste de Kock then—left Kitwyk for Java, full of dreams of glory, curry, and pineapples. He promised his sister that he would live to be a general at least, and then he would do great things for—here he nodded at young Ensign Donderkull, who stood beside her chewing a dandelion blossom, while Juffrouw de Kock hung her head until the gold ornaments at her temples played a tinkling tune. They crossed

the crumbling foot-bridge over the moat, and Juffrouw de Kock stared after them with something dim in her eyes, that played havoc with the broad back of a heavy youth in a martial pot-hat, pigtail, and cavalry boots. No, not her brother.

The day before she had taken her newly spun linen to the meadow, and as she knelt in the fresh young spring grass, and smoothed the fragrant white strips, she looked up in humble surprise as a young man sauntered heavily toward her, his hands in his breeches' pockets.

"We must go to-morrow," Ensign Donderkull broke the silence.

Juffrouw de Kock clambered to her feet, and looked steadily at the Kitwyk windmill, as if she had never seen it before.

"Java is far from here," he continued, and kicked at her neat layer of wet linen. She ignored the frightful sacrilege, and sighed.

"Java *is* very far away," she murmured, and looked down at her wooden shoes.

"Yes," said Ensign Donderkull, and rubbed his chin; then, as if seized by a sudden inspiration, "But some day, Juffrouw de Kock, I shall come back," whereupon he turned on his heel and left her standing there.

She knelt again, and picked a dandelion his valiant toes had crushed, and hid it in her pocket as if it were a crime.

Such was Juffrouw de Kock's romance. Forty years had gone by, and he had not returned, and in her Bible lay a withered flower. Some day he would come back; he had said so. So the years passed. Then one day there came home to her, with shattered dreams, a bad liver, the devil of a temper, and a small pension, her brother Overste de Kock.

He was a little sun-dried man with a temper hopelessly undermined by cayenne pepper and curries, and it was a source of never-failing interest in the tap-room of William the Silent what kind of curse word Overste de Kock would invent next.

It was a year after his return before Juffrouw de Kock summoned up enough courage to ask him a question, and a faint blush crept up her old cheeks to the edge of the frilled muslin cap.

“And young Ensign Donderkull?”

How she had pondered over that question for forty years! She was seized with a sudden terror at sound of the name which she had not heard for nearly half a century.

"Oh, ho!—young Ensign Donderkull—
young—ha! ha!—and what may you want
to know of him—young Ensign Donderkull?"

"Is—is—he living?"

"Living? I should rather think so." His
sense of the ludicrous was visibly aroused.
Living, indeed—"The rich and great Gen-
eral Donderkull!" and he wagged his head
until his pigtail tickled both his ears at once.

"The rich and great General Donderkull!"

"Commander-in-chief of the Dutch army
in Java," roared her brother. He had his
weakness, but he did not grudge the superior
good fortune of his old comrade in arms.

His sister sank on the nearest chair, and
stared first at her brother and then through
the window at the familiar slope of the
meadow. Then she spoke again:

"Is—is—he—married?"

"He married? What concern is it of yours,
Juffrouw de Kock? The great Donderkull
marry? In the devil's name, why?"

Juffrouw de Kock was silent. Rich, and
great, and a general, but unmarried—so she
might still look on the meadow when the sun
went down.

If the De Kocks of Kitwyk were poor, on the other hand the De Kocks of Amsterdam were exceedingly rich. So sensitive was Mynheer de Kock of Amsterdam that it made him ill to look at a beggar.

Even Mynheer de Kock's black poodle howled at the sight of a shabby passer-by. Mynheer was fat and choleric in a silent way, Mevrouw de Kock was fat and stony in a silent way. They sat opposite each other at two windows overlooking the canal, and while he smoked and drank tea, she knitted and drank tea. They both abhorred commotion, and they shrank together in sympathy when young Bentinck de Kock stormed in. If Mynheer could have summoned up enough energy to wonder, perhaps he would have wondered how he and Mevrouw de Kock could have been responsible for anything so lively as Bentinck. The effort of seeing him enjoy life exhausted them.

His appearance was so agitating that no sooner was he gone than his mother and father and the black poodle at once fell asleep from sheer weariness.

"Why do you smile so much?" Mynheer once asked him in his exasperation.

"Because life is so pleasant, and I am your son," he answered gaily.

"Young man, do I smile in that inane fashion?"

"Ah, Mynheer, you have no such reason," the other answered lightly; "for you are my father."

He had been turned out of several educational establishments and two universities by reason of his liveliness, but he resigned himself to an uncompleted education with perfect composure until he decided that for a broadening of pure worldly knowledge there is nothing like travel, especially in the direction of Paris.

Mynheer and Meyrouw were so exhausted by the mere sight of seeing their son enjoy life that they consented with alacrity, their only condition being that he must take old Gimborn with him on his travels.

In the days when Mynheer de Kock was a magnate in the East India trade, Gimborn traveled for the house in the spice and coffee line. Now he shaved Mynheer, ran his errands, and was the medium through which

worldly gossip reached his master's ears. Mynheer had such a respect for his shrewdness that he was bestowed on Bentinck as a precious talisman to shield him from destruction. Mynheer de Kock saw his son and his mentor start safely off, and then he immediately went to bed and slept an untroubled sleep, which might have been less peaceful had he been aware that, after traveling in great harmony for two hours, Bentinck parted from old Gimborn and a well-filled purse at a very pleasing watering-place which Gimborn always wished to visit, while Mynheer Bentinck proceeded to face alone the dangers of a higher education in Paris.

For three months Mynheer and Mevrouw de Kock and the black poodle reveled in profound repose. But the blissful dream came to an end. A letter to Mynheer from a serious friend in Paris recommended that young Bentinck be speedily recalled home, because—here followed a communication which all but made his wig stand on end. He stared at the missive with its great seals; he would have turned redder had that been possible; then he dashed the epistle on the window-sill with a bang that petrified Mevrouw and the poodle.

"What?" Mevrouw stammered.

"What?"

"Bentinck?" Mevrouw continued, with, for her, frightful loquacity.

"Bentinck? Yes, Bentinck!" and Mynheer thrust the letter into the deepest pocket of his dressing-gown. "And now, Mevrouw de Koek—now that your son has seen the world, the question is, blexem! how to make him forget it."

In two weeks the reluctant Bentinck returned in company with the broken reed on which he had leaned to so little profit.

"I gave my son into your keeping, Gimborn, and what have you returned?" Mynheer demanded.

Old Gimborn coughed, and nibbled at his cap. The culprit passed the door at that moment whistling a tune of a God-forsaken nature. Mynheer shuddered, and produced the awful letter.

"Do you see that, Gimborn? Did I not say to you when you started, 'Door to be locked at nine every night'?"

Here young Bentinck sauntered in, and gazed at the letter as at an old acquaintance.

"Mynheer, Gimborn is innocent. The door

was locked at nine every night. I saw to it myself; but, you see, there were two doors to the room, and I am afraid I must have got out by the other."

"Young Mynheer de Kock,"—and the old gentleman shook with rage,—“you have taken this little journey into the world on your own account, and now, blexem! you shall take one on mine. Our cousin in Kitwyk, at my express wish, accepts you as his guest for the present. He thinks Kitwyk may be rather dull for such a gay young gentleman, but go you shall."

And so young Bentinck went.

III

IF Overste de Kock had an ideal in life, it was General Donderkull. General Donderkull, outstretched in a bamboo lounging-chair in his Batavian bungalow, a vision in white linen and an apoplectic countenance, refreshing his martial soul with a cool drink, was haunted by something, he did not know what. It was a very rare occurrence, as in consequence of his high position he resigned all personal thinking

to his aide-de-camp. His adjutant was summoned.

"What did I say to you last night at quarter past eight?"

"Your Excellency was so good as to say that you thought of marrying, and that the future Excellency must be young and pretty. You further said that you would write to a friend in Holland who used to buy your horses, to choose a bride and send her over. To save yourself trouble, you would marry her future ladyship in Holland by proxy."

"So I did," his Excellency cried in high good humor. "You shall write the letter, and I will sign it. Tell Overste de Kock of Kitwyk to send me a bride at once. You know just what I want, and — and —" here his Excellency was lost in thought — "I think De Kock once had a sister, though I'm not sure. At all events, present my respectful compliments; there may be such a person."

One autumn day Kitwyk was stirred to its center by the announcement that Overste de Kock had received two letters in one day.

The next morning, as Juffrouw de Kock was frying waffles, he appeared in high good humor.

"So they all need you, Overste de Kock! The rich De Kock of Amsterdam as well as the great General Donderkull!"

"From whom is the other letter, Cornelis?"

"From General Donderkull," and he drew himself up and saluted.

"What—what—does he want?"

"The old ass—I speak now in a purely civil sense, Juffrouw—wants to marry. What are you smiling at?"

"So he has not forgotten."

"Forgotten what?"

"Forgotten me," and a faint glow crept up her cheek.

"And what have you to do with it? It is n't such as you he wants. He wants youth and beauty, ha! ha! He leaves it all to me. I am to choose her and marry her, for he cannot come over here, and she is to be sent to Java without delay."

So, while Overste de Kock, with a sense of new importance, stalked down to the village in search of a bride for his Excellency, Juffrouw de Kock raked together the cinders of two burnt waffles immolated on the shrine of memory.

When Overste de Kock appeared, his prog-

ress was like a triumphal procession. Fathers lured him into William the Silent, he was courtesied to at the distance of half a mile, his health was a subject of frantic interest, and the next Sunday at church he eclipsed in interest even the new candidate, and when the school-master struck up the hymn,

To Thee from whom all blessings flow,

every maternal eye was steadily set in the direction of Overste de Kock.

For the first time Ten Brink was overrun with visitors. So full were the rooms of aspirants for the hand of General Donderkull that one day, when the great Mevrouw van Loo was announced, there was not an inch of room for her. A yellow chariot with a black hood deposited her at the old foot bridge, while the youth of Kitwyk, in nightcap and wooden shoes, looked admiringly on, and traced with their dirty forefingers the noble crest of the Van Loos on the chariot door.

In this strait her ladyship was shown to the banqueting-hall of Ten Brink. She resolutely ignored the De Kock's undergarments hanging up to dry, for she was above everything a mother.

So close they sat, she and the captain, that her bird of paradise all but nipped his wig, while the linen flapped softly about them. No one will ever know the details of this interview, but before long a rumor dashed the budding hopes of Kitwyk that Overste de Kock had selected young Janet van Loo to be the future Excellency Donderkull.

IV

YOUNG Janet van Loo was reared by her parent as if that estimable woman had not been a mother, but a drum-major. Every morning she was terrified out of a sound sleep by a gong which had been brought from China years before by a Van Loo without nerves.

In the Spanish days some old Van Loo had probably been a traitor to traditions, and loved where he should have hated; and one fine day — for crime will out — the old Spanish type reappeared with tragic dark eyes, midnight hair, and a mouth curved to a wistful beauty, in the face of a young Dutch maid, with a lace cap on her dusky locks, and under it a golden helmet worn by the ladies Van Loo since before the days of Philip II.

Janet van Loo recognized in her heart only a strictly necessary organ; while as for love, Heaven and Mevrouw forbid!

At this time an extraordinary event took place in Kitwyk — the ladies of Kitwyk appeared mornings at the pump without their nightcaps!

And the cause? Well, the cause lolled gracefully in the porch of William the Silent, his cocked hat rather back on his handsome head. Such a young and gallant stranger! The gentlemen of Kitwyk were mostly elderly, and the stray examples of youth were of a heavy pattern who would do to marry, of course, but with whom no one ever fell in love.

Along the mansion of Jonkheer van Loo ran a deep canal. A soft breeze rippled its quiet surface, and swayed the brakes and reeds and willow-bushes along its banks, and tinkled the bells of the Chinese pagoda. In the pagoda, in the arm-chair of Jonkheer van Loo, sat his only daughter knitting and deep in thought. She looked up at sound of her name. Toni Defregge stood in the doorway, and there was a coquettish tilt to her cap which troubled Mistress van Loo. Her dark blue gown was

discreetly short, and so were the sleeves caught below the elbow, while the linen kerchief crossed on her breast revealed the sweetest round throat; and when she laughed she threw back her head, and one saw two dazzling rows of little teeth—and Juffrouw Defregge was just seventeen. She was palpitating with important information.

“How I have hurried, Janet! Never have I seen one so handsome and with such an air—”

“So you have seen him, Toni?”

Mistress Defregge’s face fell.

“Why, then you’ve seen him too, and never told me!”

“Why should you care? He has been here a week. Has he not lovely feathers?”

“Janet, of whom are you talking?”

“Of our new rooster.”

“Janet, I speak of a young man.”

“Is that all!”

“You don’t know what you are talking about.”

Juffrouw van Loo was placidly nettled. “What is there to see in a young man? Have I not my father? If he wore teeth like Mevrouw van Laan and had his hair, would he not be a young man?”

"That is not enough, Janet. This young Mynheer is tall and most sweetly thin; we met at the pump, and he looked at me so," and Toni Defregge threw a languishing glance at the Van Loo calf that strolled into view. "I took the pump-handle, but before I could move it he was beside me. Said he, with such a bow, such a sweep of his hat,—and, Janet, such a hat!—'Permit me to serve you, fair Juffrouw.' He pumped with such sweet grace! Whereupon I drank slowly, with one eye cast down as becoms a maid, but with the other I peeped over the mug. What clothes! Then he takes the dipper, and drinks right after me, and does so"—here Juffrouw Defregge unburdened herself of a prodigious sigh.

"He was not a cleanly young man," Juffrouw van Loo remarked with conviction.

"He said it tasted all the sweeter; you do not understand these things, Janet."

"Oh—oh!"

Mistress Defregge looked at her shoe-buckle. "It would be very pleasant to love such a young Mynheer."

"To do what?"

"I should like to love such a young Mynheer."

"Well, why don't you?"

"I don't know how to begin."

"Ask your father. He is Burgomaster; he ought to know. But why do you wish to love a stranger when you have your father?"

"Janet," Toni whispered, "it would be very pleasing if he should like me, too."

"But why should he?"

"I don't know, only I have heard that young maids and young men do sometimes like each other."

"Have you, Toni? I will ask mother; she will know."

"Janet, if you ever marry, would you rather he 'd be young or old?"

"It makes no difference, Toni; only he must be just like papa."

"Janet, I would rather mine were not at all like my father."

"Toni, that is wicked!"

"I cannot help it. Ever since the pump I think of things that I never dreamed of before. Janet, do you believe that Mevrouw, your mother, ever loved Jonkheer van Loo, your father?"

Janet looked unspeakably shocked.

"Oh, Toni, never!"

"A foolish question. I should have known. It is, of course, the people who do not marry who love each other."

For the first time in her life Juffrouw van Loo wondered. Two days after, she thus addressed her mother:

"Mother, were you ever in love with father?"

Who can describe the resentment, the consternation, of that superior woman!

"In love with your father? Who has dared—" Mevrouw gasped for breath.

"Toni Defregge wishes to love a young Mynheer, and am I not as old as she is? It is time that I did, for if I marry I shall have no more chance." Whereupon Mevrouw felt truly that the great round, level earth had given way under her.

v

Two young maids met near the pump.

"Janet, there he is!"

"Who, Toni?"

"You dull thing! The young Mynheer. In the tavern porch. Are you looking?"

"Y-yes, Toni."

"Is he not a dream of a young Mynheer?"

"I—I—how can I tell? Let me fill my pail."

"Why, Janet, what ails you?"

"Nothing, Toni, only it hardly befits a maid to stare at a strange young man as you do. He feels it to be wrong, and he is going."

Mistress van Loo was mistaken. So far was young Mynheer de Kock from recognizing the impropriety of Mistress Defregge's conduct, that he strolled over to the pump and inundated her pail with crystal-clear water until it threatened Mistress Defregge's high-heeled shoes. And such a pretense as she made to raise her pail, and fail, whereupon he gallantly came to her aid, and so they carried it off between them, she looking at him round the dangling gold fretwork on her cheek. Never was there a pail that reached its destination so empty, and Juffrouw van Loo, looking after, grieved for the wasted water, and then with a sigh went slowly home.

Her mother stood at the door of the best room. "Come in, Janet; I have something very pleasant to tell you." Never before had Mevrouw spoken to her in such gentle tones.

It was the sacred room from which all Van Loos were married or buried. Three centuries of them looked down from the chilly walls. An oak table imprisoned a sofa upon which it was an honor but not a joy to sit, and twelve rigid chairs punctuated the apartment. The slippery floor represented the unfaltering energy of the ladies Van Loo, while a white-tiled stove in a corner was capable of striking a chill to the brightest fire.

Overste de Kock sat in the seat of honor on the sofa, while Jonkheer van Loo drummed a perplexed tune on the polished table, whereupon Mevrouw scowled.

Overste de Kock broke the silence. "Do you wonder why we wish to speak to you, my child?"

"Juffrouw van Loo never wonders."

"You are right, as always, Mevrouw van Loo. Let us put it differently. Have you ever thought of marrying, Juffrouw?"

"Pardon me, Mynheer. Juffrouw van Loo has never been allowed to consider such—such—such frivolities."

"Then in Heaven's name manage it yourself, Mevrouw!"

A flush crept up to Juffrouw van Loo's lace cap, and her heart beat fast.

"Janet,"—Mevrouw undertook the task with no waste of sentiment,—“your hand has been asked in marriage, and we have given our consent. It is a good match even for a Van Loo, and it was all owing to your mother, child, that the choice did not fall on that minx Toni Defregge. What have you to say, Janet?”

Juffrouw van Loo flushed, hesitated, then spoke, hanging her head, “Mother, is—is—he young?”

“And may I ask, Juffrouw van Loo, what that is to you?”

“Nothing—nothing,” she murmured, and listened absently to the biography of General Donderkull, while her ill-regulated mind would stray to the market-place, where two sauntered across the cobblestones in the morning sunlight, a water-pail between them, and the water splashing, while the young Mynheer looked down into the eyes of his companion with a glance that hitherto had been ignored in the education of Juffrouw van Loo.

VI

YOUNG Bentinck de Kock had been expected by Overste de Kock in an attitude of armed neutrality.

On a misty, early autumn day—the castle moat was choked with leaves—there was a knock at the front door, and Juffrouw de Kock found a gallant young man reposing on the chintz cushions of the settle, who examined the simple outlines of Kitwyk with a rueful visage.

He sprang to his feet.

"I know who you are; you are Betje de Kock, and I am a black sheep sent out to pasture—I am Bentinck de Kock."

Overste de Kock received the black sheep sternly. "None of your tricks here, young man, blexem! The ways of Paris and Kitwyk are not the same."

"As if I did n't know!" and young Mynheer remembered the cobblestones of Kitwyk.

"All the same," Overste de Kock began, then interrupted himself. "What are you staring at, Juffrouw de Kock? Go and air young Bentinck's bed."

The good lady retired most unwillingly.

"And now, Bentinck, as between man and man, what about Paris?"

Juffrouw de Kock lived in a dream. To her young Bentinck was a realization of old fancies, while Overste de Kock never tired of the young rascal's accounts of those sinful Paris days. He roared, and he beat his thin knees, and his eyes overflowed with innocent admiration.

"And that fool of a De Kock of Amsterdam cannot appreciate this paragon of a boy! God forgive him!" he cried.

To please her young idol, Juffrouw de Kock evolved culinary miracles, and the result was gout, at least for the captain, and the very day he lay helpless, swathed in flannel, there came to him a package from Java. It was a miniature painted on ivory, and attached to a fine gold necklace.

"For my bride," General Donderkull wrote placidly, "a betrothal present. I wish the betrothal and wedding to take place at once."

"The old fool wants to be married at once, and how can he when I am laid up with the gout?"

"And—and—what is that?" asked his sister.

"The old idiot's picture. A present for his bride—ugh!"

"Let me see it."

A fat man with a pear-shaped head deep set between his shoulders, a scarlet face, a little powdered wig, a tight uniform, and no end of buttons. She stroked it gently, and sighed.

"Cornelis," she spoke at last, "may—may—I bring her the picture? I—I should like to give her a little happiness, though she has so much."

"Juffrouw de Kock, you are undoubtedly mad."

She made great preparations. Wearing an old brocaded black silk that had been her mother's, and about her shoulders a crapè scarf, and her coal-scuttle bonnet over her best cap, and with an embroidered reticule on her arm, she passed the kitchen.

Young Bentinek, drumming idly on the window, sprang down the steps after her.

"May I go with you, Cousin Betje?"

"Not this time, Bentinek. I go only to Juffrouw van Loo's. I—I—have a message for her."

"The young maid with the strange, dark eyes? Was there ever such a Dutch maid!"

"She is indeed very beautiful."

"And this beautiful young maid is willing to marry an old man, I hear."

"A man so great has a right to youth and beauty," she said proudly as she turned away.

THE old woman took both the girl's hands, and gazed at her with wistful eyes.

"You have so much happiness, dear child; but I wish a little to come from me. It is only the whim of an old woman."

"And what makes you think I am so happy, Juffrouw de Kock?"

"A young girl, just betrothed to so great and distinguished a man," Juffrouw said under her breath.

"That may well be, but I do not know him."

"But when you do know him—see, I have brought what in all the world you will prize most—his picture, which he sends to you, my child. I begged to be allowed to bring it to you because of—of—is it not noble?" she asked tremulously.

"And—and is that he?"

"Yes, dear child; that is he. Is he not splendid?"

"And I—I am to marry this old man?" The girl hid her face on the sacred table as if tears could not stain; and the miniature of General Donderkull fell on the floor.

In an instant the other picked up the picture, and rubbed it with awe-struck hands.

"What ails you, child?"

"I—I will not marry him. No; I will not—never—never!"

"You will not marry what?" and in the doorway loomed Mevrouw her mother.

"What have you in your hands, Juffrouw de Kock?"

"It is the miniature of—of General Donderkull—a gift to his betrothed."

"How fine a man, and how prosperous he looks, and was there ever a handsomer gold setting? And it seems to me, Janet, as if his Excellency has a look of your father."

"He looks just like papa," Juffrouw van Loo cried in a burst of grief. And who can account for the inconsistencies of the human heart when that which, a few weeks before, Juffrouw van Loo considered an essential to a happy marriage, now nearly broke her heart?

VII

JUFFROUW VAN LOO's consent being of no consequence, it was decided that the betrothal was to take place at once, followed by the marriage; then she was to sail for Java as soon as possible.

Juffrouw Rozenboom, the one milliner and dressmaker of Kitwyk, had to sew day and night to complete the toilets. There were those who remarked that Juffrouw Rozenboom's creations bore a striking resemblance to each other.

Overste de Kock unearthed his uniform to do honor to his position as proxy bridegroom, and he looked very grand, and smelled strongly of camphor.

It was the last autumn day, and a frost had touched the garden flowers, the falling leaves whirled along the cobblestones, and the chestnut trees about the church were bare. In the mansion of Van Loo there was a sense of solemn festivity. In a grim myrtle arbor at the head of the grim best room were placed two forbidding chairs. In one sat Juffrouw van Loo, waiting for the representative of the great General Donderkull. There was a

commendable absence of joy, and the Van Loos present were so old and inferior that the miniature of General Donderkull reposing on the breast of the bride gained by contrast.

A disapproving murmur from the Van Loos was distinctly audible as the door opened.

"Janet, this is a most unexpected change; but as the Burgomaster is waiting, we will go."

Juffrouw van Loo looked up with supreme indifference; then her heart stopped beating, and then it beat like a hammer. Where was Overste de Kock? What business had he here whose brown eyes looked into hers for the first time with such pity? A great red flush swept over her pale face, and for a moment the miniature of General Donderkull had an uneasy resting-place.

"My cousin was suddenly taken ill," Bentinaek explained, "and my unworthy self he chose to take his place, and that — that — of the happy —"

Here he gazed at the old face in the miniature, and then once again into the dark eyes that met his with a glance of defiance.

So it was. Captain de Kock was stricken with the gout, and postponement was impos-



sible, for who can tell when a gout-afflicted man will be released from his foe?

"Let young Bentinck take my place," he roared in pain; and so Mynheer de Kock was reluctantly ushered into the presence of his temporary bride, who laid her little cold hand in his, and, followed by the Van Loos, they crossed the market-place to the town hall, where they declared their marriage intentions in due form, and for the first time in his life General Donderkull appeared in the person of a young and gallant man.

In the myrtle arbor young Bentinck whispered, "You are now my betrothed, so at least I may kiss your hand, Juffrouw," and his brown eyes flashed as he bent his head, while the roses swept to the golden bangles against her cheek, and she said not a word, only watched him, her lips parted.

So they sat side by side in the myrtle prison, and the Van Loos present filed past. The first day there was a rosy flush in Juffrouw van Loo's face and her eyes sparkled, and as Mevrouw made a parting courtesy of a gorgeous nature to a Van Loo much greater and richer than herself, she shuddered at the sound of a gay young laugh.

Her prophetic eye darted toward the myrtle arbor, and discovered young Mynheer looking at his bride with a glance most undesirable in a temporary bridegroom, while the bride smiled and played with her fan, and both were supremely indifferent to a shoal of Van Loos blocked before them and bursting with congratulations to which no one listened. At sound of her mother's voice the bride turned pale, and at that moment Mevrouw, to her horror, made another discovery: the miniature of the worthy general had disappeared. She waited till the last Van Loo was bowed out, and then she asked, "Where is the picture of your bridegroom?"

"It tired my throat, and I took it off," and out of the back of the chair she produced that work of art.

"And is this how you treat the portrait of your distinguished husband, you wicked girl?"

"But, mother, he is not my husband yet, thank Heaven!"

Mevrouw van Loo staggered back in horror.

"Put it on instantly! What will people say! This is — is — a scandal!"

Juffrouw van Loo turned still paler, and Mynheer de Kock rose with such haste that he kicked over his myrtle-crowned chair.

"Mevrouw van Loo," said her daughter, "I am tired of seeing this good man's face. It will be my fate to see it for the rest of my life; be pleased, therefore, to let me forget the sight of it for at least these two weeks."

Mevrouw shook to her bird of paradise. "Put it on instantly!" and with her own ungentle hands she clasped the gold chain about her daughter's throat. Juffrouw van Loo gazed at the medallion. She held a fan in her hand, and the ivory sticks broke with a sudden snap.

"Mother, believe me, it would be better if —if I did not see it these days."

"I say you shall — every day."

It did seem as if the painted Van Loos gazed down on her with growing disfavor, as if they suspected in their painted minds that a Van Loo so disgracefully Spanish must take after that treacherous ancestor who had shown himself so unworthy of his race in having a heart. Perhaps it was the bride's imagination, but it seemed to her as if the good people who offered their congratulations gazed

curiously at that red face on her breast, and threw contrasting glances at young Mynheer de Kock, who, as the days passed, grew more silent and unsmiling. When his duties were over, and he returned to Ten Brink, not a word could the captain or his sister get out of him, but he paced his room half the night, to the dismay of the old woman.

Two days before the wedding, when Kitwyk awoke, a black frost had struck the ditches and canals. The meadows had turned a russet-brown, and the herds were lowing in the barns, while the wings of the windmills swung as if for warmth. The sky was blue, and the sun shone clear, while the wind cut like a lash. Juffrouw van Loo stood at the window, gazing wistfully out where a stretch of the Kitwyk canal lay frozen stiff between the bare willow-bushes and the dry reeds, as the door opened and young Mynheer de Kock appeared, his face aglow with buffeting the wind.

"Come out with me, Juffrouw Janet," he urged, "and gather roses for your cheeks."

"It is the last winter I shall see," She looked down at the medallion, and then up into his eager face, and tried to smile.

"I shall never see again the frozen canal where I have skated so many a time. And I should like to skate once again before—before—" she looked up at him with eyes full of tears.

"If the ice is strong enough."

"That is nothing to me."

"Nor to me. Let us go."

There was one point of the canal soonest frozen. The bride sat on the bank, and the bridegroom strapped on the skates with the great, bold curves, and Juffrouw van Loo's roses came back in all their glory. She buried her hands deeper in her big muff, and her rosy chin in the long black boa wound about her throat. Over her cap she wore a great black hat, and in its shade she watched him silently while he fastened the skates, the blood tingling to his curly brown hair as he knelt before her. Was there ever a fairer Dutch maid, as she flew across the ice—the click of the skates, the sparkle of her eyes, and the roses in her cheeks, and every instant under the full blue petticoats the glimpse of a buckled shoe and a red stocking?

On and on they flew, and the light clasp of their two hands grew closer and closer, and

from looking straight before them their eyes began to seek each other, until their glances met in one passionate look, and as if with one accord they crept closer and closer together, and at last, always flying like the wind, his arm was about her, and just as they reached the shelter of a willow-tree, her head, cap, and all, lay on his breast, and Mynheer de Kock, bending his handsome head, kissed the red lips of Juffrouw van Loo—once—twice—why count?—until Juffrouw van Loo, with a passionate sob, pushed him away, and cried:

“And I am to be married in two days, God forgive me!”

Here the ice gave a frightful crack, being too weak to uphold such passionate lovers, and they would assuredly have gone under had not Bentinek grasped the friendly willow, while he upheld Juffrouw van Loo, who trembled as if the icy water had reached her poor, weak heart. He lifted her to the bank, and knelt before her to unbuckle the skates.

“Take me home! Oh, take me home!” she cried. “See how unworthy I am to be a good man’s wife!”

“You unworthy! O my darling! Only give me the right to call you mine.”

"What right have I?" she sobbed, and stumbled to her feet. "O Mynheer, forget how weak and wicked I have been, and take me home."

The sun curved toward the west, the wind was dying away. Not a word did either speak, but, as if with one accord, they walked apart in the narrow path beside the canal. Only when their eyes met, it was like a magnet to draw them together. They passed the turning windmills, and here and there a barge frozen in the canal, the skipper on deck surveying the situation with philosophy while he puffed at his pipe.

"Why waste the road between you, my pretty ones?" an ancient man called after them.

"To-morrow you can skate to Rotterdam, little dame," another friendly soul roared at them from a barge; "and would n't I like to be the young Mynheer to buckle on your skates?"

Yes; they came back, and the green arbor received them once more, and Mevrouw proved to be a false prophet.

VIII

WILLIAM THE SILENT overflowed with rich Van Loos, all gratified to be so soon related to the great General Donderkull.

And the church bells swung lustily in honor of his wedding-day. They cut the cold, clear air until the ships on the Zuyder Zee, hugging the shore, heard the jangle.

THE wedding was over. ♪

It was the coldest, clearest winter night. The moon sailed high in heaven, and the landscape was an etching in black and white. The mansion of Jonkheer van Loo was a blaze of light. Through the main hall, tiled with blue delft and hung with festoons of evergreen, through the best room and the living-rooms, the tables were set to the glory of Van Loo. On the open hearth blazed a fire of peat and wood that touched with flickering light the winding stairs down which the bride descended, her hand in Bentinck de Kock's, followed by all the rich and great and hungry Van Loos.

There was little attention paid to the bride, or to the young Mynheer who had so kindly

filled the place of that great and absent man, and so the two under the canopy, being of all apparently of the least consequence, came ever nearer together, until the white arm of her Excellency touched the velvet sleeve of the bridegroom. At the sudden contact, which seemed to thrill, she turned white and he red. The greatest Van Loo was just deciphring a speech as the bride dropped her lace handkerchief, and the bridegroom stooped to where it lay at her feet. "How it happened who can tell? but he touched her hand under the folds of the heavy Dutch damask.

"Is this to be the end of all our happiness, my darling?"

She looked down, and two tears fell on her folded hands. "It is too late."

"It is not too late," he answered in passionate protest. "You are my wife; you have plighted your troth to me in the sight of God, and not to that old fool," and he frowned at the picture on young Mevrouw Donderkull's breast. "Why will you break my heart and wreck both our lives? It is I who am your husband! I, Janet—do you hear me?" and he leaned across the arm of her chair.

"Listen, love; I am your husband, and not that unknown old man who bought you. If your parents seek wealth, why, they shall be satisfied, for the De Kocks of Amsterdam are rich. My darling, come with me! Come with me to-night, dearest! I will bring you to my parents' house. I will tell them because of you I shall be a better man and a better son, and they will love you."

"But—but—how," she asked shyly, "with all the canals frozen?"

"If a Dutch Mynheer has skated to battle, surely he can skate to love."

FATE announces itself in such various shapes. This day it jogged toward Kitwyk in a yellow post chaise. There was a letter for Ten Brink demanding haste, and in the process of time the post-chaise swung up to the foot bridge where, forty years before, Ensign Donderkull disappeared forever out of the sight of Juffrouw de Kock. It was nine o'clock, and the Van Loo banquet had lasted since two.

Two invited guests did not come, but no one missed them. Overste de Kock declared he would see them — before he would go.

for all the Van Loos had ignored him to a man, and Juffrouw de Kock sat by the kitchen window and looked out on the meadow. She took a withered flower out of her Bible, and held it over the flames on the hearth; but she hesitated, and then put it back again between the leaves of the book.

There was a sharp knock at the door. A great letter with five black seals for Overste de Kock. He tore it open, read it like one dazed, and the letter fell on the floor between them. Then Juffrouw de Kock covered her head with her apron, and wept as she had not wept for forty years.

THE moonlight fell over the still garden of Van Loo, and the shadows of the bare trees lay heavy on the narrow path by the canal where they stood, Bentinck de Kock and the young Excellency Donderkull, a dark cloak over her white wedding-gown. For one moment she hid her face on his breast and sobbed.

“Have you the heart?” he cried, and kissed her eyes and lips.

“Yes; better now, better so,” and she tore herself out of his clasp.

"My love—my life—I cannot let you go. Janet, do you not see how I suffer—"

"So you call that suffering, Mynheer de Kock?" and between them loomed the captain. "And what are you doing here, Juffrouw van Loo?"

"Hush, Cornelis!" It was Juffrouw de Kock's gentle voice. "My child, hasten home before you are missed; we are on our way to your parents with sorrowful tidings."

"So, you rascal, we were just in time to save you two young fools, it seems!"

"She only came to bid me farewell—what ever my own mad hopes might have been. I love her, and I wished to save her from this frightful old man."

There was a quiet touch on his arm. "Bentick, my dear, go home, and thank God that the young maid loved you and her honor more than happiness."

IX

IN Meyrouw's room they stared angrily at the messengers of trouble, as if they were responsible.

Meyrouw spoke at last. "And he died six

weeks ago? Why, then, this is no wedding at all! My poor Janet — so — so reconciled to it. I have had my doubts recently, Overste de Kock. I considered him too old; but you would have it, and I dare say you meant well." And, after all this willingness, to have no occasion for it, Mevrouw lamented. "Excellency Donderkull — how well it sounded, poor child! And already six weeks dead!"

"Died after sending his picture."

"If the child only has another chance," Mevrouw groaned — "a child that 's been partly married; it 's so — so — improper."

"A CHANCE in the garden was taking time by the forelock," the captain growled.

"Mevrouw, grant me a favor?"

"What is it, Juffrouw de Kock? What ails you?"

"Let me tell her."

She hesitated on the threshold, and Janet ran toward her. "Something has happened, Juffrouw Betje — is Bentinck —"

"Is there no one else in all the world, child?"

Negligently thrown down on the table lay the miniature of an old man. Juffrouw de

Kock paused, and her hand touched the polished ivory.

"For pity's sake, what has happened?"

"If I should tell you, child, that you cannot marry this man, that your marriage of to-day was no marriage, what would you say?"

"I should thank God."

"Cruel! cruel! but thank God, then, if you can," and the tears fell down the old cheeks as she took the picture in her hands, "for he is dead."

"Dead!"

"And you are again Juffrouw van Loo, and you can love whom you will," she added with a quick jealousy for the one who was dead.

"Juffrouw de Kock—forgive me if I hurt you, but why do you so grieve for the one who is gone and whom you have not seen for so many years?"

Juffrouw de Kock hid her face in her long white apron before she spoke. "Because I loved him once"; then lower and lower, as if it were a crime, "Oh, child, because I love him still!" She felt two gentle hands about her neck, and her head lay against a young and loving heart.

"How can I comfort you?"

"Had you but grieved, my child."

"But how can I grieve for one I never saw?"

"I know, I know. His death is your gain," and Juffrouw de Kock turned toward the door.

"I—I cannot comfort you, I cannot grieve as I ought—but take this; it should be yours."

As Juffrouw de Kock hurried through the lane of poplar-trees, she held the miniature close in her hands, and her tears fell so thick and fast that she stumbled over the dead leaves.

THE FACTIONS OF KITWYK

AT sunset the canal at Kitwyk lay across the meadows like a red-and-gold shaft—silence everywhere, except for the monotonous croak of the bullfrogs and the melancholy chant of the crickets. On the banks of the canal loomed the Kitwyk windmill, its black sails heavily at rest, and on the horizon against the sunset a silhouette of wind-blown poplars, a disordered slant of queer gabled roofs, while a church spire and the flapping sail of an idle barge were strangely entangled and etched against the copper disk of the setting sun. Fading away into the misty distance stood a phalanx of windmills, their sails set to the last breath of the wind as it went down.

As the copper disk sank, it was the signal for a light in the window of the Kitwyk mill, by which Kitwyk knew that Divine Providence and Juffrouw van Geldern announced

the day to be at an end. Answering lights began to twinkle in the Burgomaster's house on the market-place; in the kitchen window of the castle of Ten Brink, where Juffrouw de Kock dozed gently over her Bible; lastly, in the mansion of the great Jonkheer van Loo. Not only was he great because of an ancestry that had contributed a martyr to the Duke of Alva, but because of the grandeur of Mevrouw, his wife. It is perhaps sufficient to state that Mevrouw possessed the one black velvet gown of Kitwyk, besides a bird of paradise, which on worthy occasions graced the noble structure on her head; at which time, also, a mighty gold watch dangled heavily before her. So conscious and loud was the tick of this stately timepiece that it had kept many a sleepy soul awake when the good dominie's sermon invited to repose. For fifty years this excellent man expounded, and then he died, leaving Kitwyk plunged in a turmoil of excitement; for rival candidates appeared, who pounded the pulpit cushions and roared to the glory of God. For the first time in the history of the church the select little band of martyrs in the gallery, who piped the hymns under the direction of the

schoolmaster, and the inspiring strains of Kobus, the town trumpeter, were sufficiently awake to require no prodding from the sexton with a long pole, the other end of which was furnished with a contribution-bag.

The excitement in Kitwyk culminated when Burgomaster Defregge and Mevrouw van Loo each in turn produced a candidate. There was no illusion with respect to Mevrouw's candidate. He earned a weary living by educating the Van Loo heir, and bore witness in his own person to the active Christian charity of Mevrouw. He was open to such gifts as the righteous were inclined to bestow, who naturally felt for him that contemptuous interest aroused by the recognition of one's cast-off clothes, so familiar a part of one's self, on another human being. So energetic were Mevrouw's efforts, that it was said she all but wrote his trial sermon; at all events she added the damnations that afterward electrified Kitwyk.

It was an early June morning; the windmills were set against a glorious blue sky; the barges at anchor were scrubbed to the glory of God. There was a lazy flap of dull red sail; the barge chimneys sent up a faint



"JUFFROUW DE KOCK DOZED GENTLY OVER HER BIBLE."

gray smoke, while the clean lace curtains at the windows proclaimed the sacredness of the day. The very brass knockers were scrubbed to an offensive splendor, and in the gallery the wooden shoes of the choir knocked against the railing with virtuous promptness: the sexton's rod was temporarily inactive. If *Mevrouw van Loo* sat in the chief seat right under the pulpit, on the other hand, the *Burgomaster* faced her, being one of five elders who in the circular pew about the pulpit had that sanctuary as support for their righteous backs.

Many and many a Sunday had *Mevrouw van Loo* and *Mynheer Defregge* glared at each other throughout the entire divine service, while *Jonkheer van Loo* slept the sleep of the just, oblivious to the counsels of the wise as well as to divine wrath.

The procession to church was simple and effective: it consisted of the little candidate in gown, bands, and square cap, followed by his patroness in black velvet, and under her double chin a mighty miniature of *Jonkheer van Loo*.

Two tow-headed urchins who by reason of their early piety were selected to ring the

church bell, and whose energies had languished as the last worshiper straggled into the sacred edifice, becoming aware of the approach of Meyrouw in the wake of her candidate, no sooner encountered her active eye, than they tolled with such energy that several pillars of the church were prematurely awakened, a terrible innovation prophetic of evil.

The elders straightened up powerfully, the sexton cuffed the nearest boy, the schoolmaster struck up a fine old choral, and Kobus tooted till the rafters rang, as the little candidate pattered up the aisle, flushing painfully, while behind him strode Meyrouw van Loo, the black velvet, in which Kitwyk took a municipal pride, sweeping behind her.

Such was her vainglory, Mynheer Defregge declared, that she was about to mount into the pulpit, when—

In her triumphal progress she had just reached it, when the Burgomaster leaned over his pew, and whispered most audibly:

“ Mistress van Loo,—he! he! he!—which is your candidate?”

“ Which?”

In her interest in the affairs of Divine Providence she had for the first time forgotten



“MISTRESS VAN LOO, WHICH IS YOUR CANDIDATE?”

one of her household duties, and Divine Providence, with very little consideration for her feelings or her efforts, permitted a most lamentable sacrilege; for with majestic stride, not unlike Mevrouw's, who should bring up the rear but the very biggest turkey-gobbler in all Kitwyk! For a moment the two eyed each other—the turkey reproachfully inquiring for his breakfast, Mevrouw in speechless rage. Then Mevrouw sank on the pulpit stairs. It was the sexton who at the hazard of his life leaned over the gallery and swung the contribution-bag in the face of the mistaken fowl, which swelled with outraged dignity, but was otherwise unmoved.

Even the Burgomaster felt for Mevrouw. "Shoo!" he cried, and waved his cocked hat at the bird over the pew rail, while the four elders threatened him with red bandana handkerchiefs and gold-headed canes, which, combined with an empty stomach, goaded him almost to madness. Overste de Kock, in virtue of his military character, was about to leap forward and cope with the enemy, but Juffrouw Rozenboom fainted just across the pew door, and there is really no knowing how it would have ended, had not Jonkheer van Loo

awakened to the situation from a peaceful nap.

"Bless me! what is Ephraim doing here?" he asked placidly. Ephraim was the turkey's domestic name.

The candidate had retreated into the pulpit and bolted the door,—he knew the ferocious character of turkeys,—Mevrouw van Loo in a panic fled up the pulpit steps, while the turkey, shrieking after the manner of his kind, stood at bay, with tail outspread against the pew door of the afflicted Juffrouw Rozenboom.

Then it was that Jonkheer van Loo proved himself to be of the heroic stock of the Van Loo who suffered under Alva.

Alone and unprotected he stepped into the aisle and confronted the enemy, which seemed to recognize the familiar scarlet countenance, for he partly lowered his tail, and retreated a step or two.

"Why, Ephraim, you have n't had any breakfast, have you?" said the heroic man. "Now come home with me!" which so convinced the fowl that he lowered his tail and ambled out of the sanctuary, followed by his master, who thus forcibly demonstrated the advantages of a heroic ancestry, the congre-



MEVROUW'S CANDIDATE.

THE SINGULAR CLEVERNESS OF TOBY VAN LOO

THE next candidate for the vacant pulpit of Kitwyk was the Burgomaster's.

Rumors were conflicting; newspapers were unknown; but thank Heaven! there was the town-pump.

Everything in Kitwyk radiated from the town-pump, a great iron structure with a stout handle, at which Kitwyk had exercised its muscles since before the days of the Spaniards.

The pump stood in the middle of the sleepy market-place, flanked on one side by the church, mildewing behind a row of chestnut-trees, and the town-hall, where a blindfolded Justice without a nose presided over the entrance. On the other side stood the tavern William the Silent, which once harbored that great man, whose grave face, with peaked beard and mighty ruff, decorated the swinging sign, which creaked dismally when the



THE TOWN PUMP.

wind swept up from the Zuyder Zee. The two settles in the porch were never without a pair of worthy burghers, who smoked and stared into vacancy, occasionally roused to active earthly interest by the squeak of the town-pump.

The code of etiquette of Kitwyk was most rigid: it was an unwritten law that no one existed until afternoon. Although everybody had to go to the pump for water, and consequently the ladies met there every morning, arrayed in a *negligée* of clogs and nightcaps, it was, nevertheless, decreed that Kitwyk was socially invisible in the morning, so that when these worthy dames met of an afternoon, they took up their remarks not from pump-time, but from any previous meeting guiltless of nightcaps and clogs.

When Mevrouw van Laan clattered across the market-place of an early morning, and with the help of a stout maid carried a great basket of snow-white linen that had been bleaching on the meadow, she was socially invisible, for not only was she in her nightcap, but she was without her teeth. The latter were a startling innovation to which Kitwyk with difficulty had reconciled itself

when Mevrouw, being of an adventurous nature, brought them in triumph from Rotterdam, years before.

Rumor was active in Kitwyk, and a great deal of water was wasted at the pump.

The important Sunday arrived—a hot July day, tempered by a lazy breeze that flecked the scarlet poppies in the wheat-fields, the yellow furze by the roadside, and the deep red clover about the Kitwyk mill.

At the open door of his house on the market place, where the cool shade of the tile-paved hall formed a pleasing contrast to the July sun, the Burgomaster waited for his candidate. In the shade of four linden-trees trained flat against the buff-brick walls, Mynheer Defregge dozed in company with his dog Polder. Overhead, perched on a window-sill, a young person watched the road in the discreet shadow of a pot of mignonette.

There was a rosy flush on Juffrouw Defregge's round face, for she was awaiting the realization of her dreams.

No romance in Kitwyk, indeed! An inventory of Juffrouw Defregge's head would have dispelled such an illusion.

The announcement came by the weekly



"MYNHEER DEFREGGE DOZED IN COMPANY WITH HIS
DOG FOLDER."

"Post," and Juffrouw Toni across the tea-kettle gave a sigh that strained her blue bodice to the utmost. Mynheer considered sighs as almost immoral.

A young Dominie, of course! How willingly she would go to church, and at the bare thought Juffrouw Defregge's nose tried to subdue its upward tilt to a new air of devotion.

Once Juffrouw Toni had almost had a romance, not unconnected with the pump and a slim stranger; but there had come a blight, and she decided to turn to religion for consolation,—religion expounded by something young and soul-subduing,—and so she surveyed her wardrobe, and piously left the rest to Divine Providence.

The questions she asked her parent filled him with consternation; all she extracted was that the candidate was unmarried, on which frail foundation she built so fast that she secretly meditated on the cut of surplices.

How would he burst upon Kitwyk? Out of her imagination, aided by the Van Loo state chariot, she evolved an equipage into which she clapped a slim and serious young man whose saintly composure was only to be ruffled by her blue eyes.

Having arranged the preliminaries, Juffrouw Defregge waited to hear the chariot clatter into the market-place. However, nothing was to be heard but the buzz of the locusts and the creak of the pump, as a very dry worshiper helped himself to water. She overlooked a dusty individual with a bundle under his arm, though Polder did not; he trotted out, made all preparations to bark, then changed his mind, and his greeting to a friendly sniff.

If he were not to come! It would be just like her father to sleep under such disastrous circumstances.

She flew down-stairs, partly for consolation, partly for reproach. There was no one in the porch but an elderly stranger, who mopped his bald head with a yellow handkerchief. "Begin with my boots, young woman," and he stretched out two prodigious, dusty feet, and took a pinch of snuff.

Juffrouw Defregge fled in company with her blighted hopes, and a housemaid dusted the holy man, and helped him on with his gown, which was in the bundle along with a dog-eared sermon.

The only miracle that attended his advent

was the behavior of the dog Polder. Polder, who greeted all newcomers with outrageous howls, at once took up his position on the gown as its owner thumbed his discourse, and watched his movements with the most ardent friendliness.

Of the worshipers who passed, only Toby van Loo paused irresolutely. Toby van Loo enjoyed the distinction of being the only dog who went to church: because of his ear-splitting voice, and the high social position of Jonkheer van Loo, this privilege was accorded him, as his yelps of anguish on being separated from his master at the church door impeded divine service.

To the scandal of the more democratic, Toby was locked in the vestry during service, where he resigned himself to the new order of things, and slept to "Amen."

It was this privileged animal who paused on his way to the sanctuary, then ambled up to Polder on the gown, who received him with growls.

But Polder was seized by his fat neck as he prepared to follow his Reverence to church, and borne into the house, where, mounted on a chair by the window, he wailed in unex-

plained anguish. The more fortunate Toby clung to the sacred coat-tails, and was with difficulty prevented from precipitating himself after the candidate into the church through the vestry door; as it was, his wail of disappointment was distinctly audible. At this very inopportune moment, as the candidate knelt in prayer, a light of an exceedingly earthly nature dawned on him as his heels came in sudden contact with the long tails of his coat.

Toby's sudden passion was explained, and at the same time his Reverence broke into a profuse perspiration as he realized that between him and a pampered brute there was only the rickety vestry door at the foot of the pulpit. What would the greedy beast care for the sacred occasion? Little did the worshippers suspect the anguish of the man of God.

Kobus tooted, the little band sang shrilly, and the congregation struggled independently after.

Mevrouw van Loo settled herself in her black velvet with Christian anticipations of the enemy's defeat; but presently the candidate recovered himself, and expounded with such energy that Mevrouw grew discouraged, while





"HE STORMED TO HIS CLIMAX IN RAFTERY."

the dust of the pulpit cushions rose as a votive offering.

In his zeal the good man forgot his foe in the vestry. He thumped the Bible, he stormed to his climax in rapture, and just reached it when — when the vestry door creaked on its hinges. That was enough, — he faltered — he was lost.

The wretched dog! He heard him creep up the pulpit stairs, a warm breath fanned his heels. “Get thee behind me, Satan!” roared the distracted man of God, and, lifting a ponderous foot, he struck backward.

A partly suppressed wail, and the thumping of an invisible body down the pulpit stairs, roused the congregation out of their peaceful slumbers.

The service was over. The candidate turned grimly to encounter the slaughtered Toby. But there was n’t even a drop of blood — only the Burgomaster.

But at the vestry door Mynheer Defregge fell back in horror. “What in thunder!”

Before the stove, beating the floor with his stump of a tail, lay Toby van Loo, happy and uninjured, but in a corner, his head tied up in a red bandana handkerchief, groaned the sexton.

"Rozenboom, what under the sun has happened?"

"Please, your Worship,—his—his Reverence kicked me!"

Mynheer stared aghast. As an introduction of a shepherd to his flock, it could hardly be considered auspicious.

"His Reverence had preached an hour and a half, and so I crept up the pulpit stairs, taking off my shoes for fear of noise, to notify him of the lateness of the hour, and just as I got behind him, with no provocation at all, out comes his foot, and—O Lord! O Lord!"

Mevrouw van Loo arrived on the scene just in time to send for gin and linen, with a great display of righteous horror.

"I kicked because I thought it was that confounded dog," his Reverence roared, and took three solid pinches of snuff.

"Wanted to kick my dog Toby!" Jonkheer van Loo grew scarlet with rage. "Come away from him, Toby!" But the faithful Toby clung to the clerical coat-tails.

"What should tempt a poor dumb beast into the pulpit?" shouted his outraged master.

"Tempt him!" The candidate snapped his snuff-box, dived into his coat-tails, and bore

aloft, wrapped in a blue handkerchief, the remains of a noble sausage.

"Part was my breakfast ; this is my dinner. We sha'n't suit each other, and so I bid you good day. Your servant !" and being a peppery man of God, he flounced out of the vestry, his gown flapping, in one hand his sermon and in the other the sausage ; and so he shouldered his way through the straggling worshipers in the market-place.

The miraculous cleverness of Toby was acknowledged ; but for him the spiritual welfare of Kitwyk might have been intrusted to a pastor whose fatal facility with his heels would have proved a sad example for the rising generation.

So the Burgomaster's candidate was defeated by Toby van Loo, to the joy of that blighted spinster, Toni Defregge.

The Italian violoncello sent by Jonkheer van Loo to old Rozenboom, to atone for the injuries he so undeservedly received, was felt by Kitwyk to be a frank confession of guilt on the part of that worthy man for having used his social position to demand unrighteous privileges in the sanctuary.

THE VIOLONCELLO OF JUFFROUW ROZENBOOM

I

THERE was a frightful rivalry between Kitwyk and Ketwyk. Sauntering along the canal, you reached Kitwyk in about fifteen minutes. Municipal economy provided both villages with one Burgomaster, and as he graced Kitwyk, along with the church, there was about it a certain aristocratic flavor which Ketwyk lacked.

On the other hand, Ketwyk boasted of the doctor and the apothecary in the person of Dr. Pynappel, and also of the great cheese establishment of Piepenbrink & Co.

Adventurous spirits of Ketwyk saved themselves from utter stagnation by occasional flights to Kitwyk—certain reckless ones had been observed in the porch of William the Silent, pensively devouring sour milk powdered with cinnamon and sugar, gazing to

ward forsaken Ketwyk, meanwhile, with a secret sense of homesickness.

Mynheer Joris Piepenbrink of Ketwyk, the head of the great cheese house, was an elderly bachelor who dreaded to be married against his will. To prevent such a catastrophe his nephew and heir, Jan Willem Piepenbrink, on pain of disinheritance, was instructed to rush in and make a third in every tête-à-tête.

When Mynheer was safe from feminine wiles he could turn his whole ardent attention to his health.

One day Dr. Pynappel found him a quivering heap of anguish in his arm-chair, two pudgy hands out-thrust and his tongue feebly wagging.

"Can't find your pulse? D—— your pulse! Get married, and you 'll forget you 've got one!"

"No—no!" and Mynheer actually sobbed.

"Exercise you must have!" So the doctor proposed music.

The doctor was a violoncello enthusiast; he described that delicious sawing motion of back and arms until Mynheer was partly convinced. That very night the doctor sent over his third-best 'cello by the cook, and gave

Mynheer his first lesson with such success that for fifteen blissful minutes that worthy man forgot that he had a pulse. He took to the wailings of the violoncello with rapture, and melted over its strings two hours a day, to his increasing joy.

The next step was his presence, as a humble disciple, at the musical evenings of *Mevrouw van Laan*. For eighteen years she had played trios with the doctor and the Burgomaster - not exactly trios either, for, as these worthy gentlemen played only the violoncello, they were naturally obliged to play the same part.

Twice a week they met, discoursing music more or less sweet, with rage in their hearts, for their intentions with regard to the lady were an open secret; yet after eighteen patient years the lady was still awaiting a declaration.

Time passed so quickly without any emotion to mark it as with a mile-stone, that if it had not been for young *Jillis van Laan* and the increasing breadth of her whom they both adored, it might to all intents and purposes have been the selfsame day when *Dr. Pynapple* and the Burgomaster, *Mynheer Defregge*, met at the widow's brass knocker,

each with a violoncello in a green baize bag under his arm, both coming with the philanthropic intention of cheering the recently bereaved widow with a little music.

At the open door they were greeted by unmerciful shrieks.

It was little Jillis, and little Jillis was evidently being cuffed. The fair widow descended with a flush on her cheek, and found her consolers stranded on two stiff chairs, glaring defiance at each other. Neither gave way, and so the three played duets, which is ever a mistake.

In the course of years Jillis descended from the apartment in which she first howled, and was accepted below as a necessary evil. It was, to say the least, disconcerting to do any courting before that child. Perched on a high chair, she gazed at the two gentlemen with round blue eyes and an inquiring smile. But when for the first time Mevrouw van Laan abdicated the spindle-legged piano-stool and hoisted Jillis to the level of the yellow keys, the two amateurs declared it to be monstrous; but Mevrouw was not without a sense of injury because of those years of silence.

To play with that brat of a child—never!

But man is the creature of habit, and by and by they grew callous. The brat, dragged to the instrument by the tails of her flaxen hair, merged into a rosy-cheeked young maid, who one day was found to have grown up. On making this simultaneous discovery, the Burgomaster appeared in a new coat, and the doctor in a new wig.

Immolated on the altar of music, Jillis presented to that divine art a perfectly vacant mind, untroubled by discords or harmonies, so that after a couple of hours' struggle she was enabled to emerge exhausted, to be sure, but good-natured, the harmonies having been mercifully stopped at her outer ear, leaving her to meditate on the problems dear to her—for instance, the brewing of a cordial into which she poured all the romance of her placid heart.

"Parfait Amour" it was called, and it was a rich, rosy liquid, and, as was eminently proper, of a somewhat sluggish flow. On the surprising discovery that Jillis was grown up, the two adorers of *Mevrouw* were more than ever undecided about declaring their passion to her parent; each, indeed, felt a praise-

worthy impulse to resign her to the other. It was just at this time that the doctor brought Mynheer Piepenbrink to the musical evenings, and Mynheer was in turn accompanied by his panacea against feminine wiles, Jan Willem. Should Mevrouw smile too warmly on Mynheer, he could find in Jan Willem's presence a moral support.

Jan Willem, who abhorred music with the one enthusiasm of his nature, was reconciled only at sight of that other victim, who, however, for the first time, not only ceased to yawn, but was blissfully conscious—though she turned to him only a bewildering, burnished surface of yellow braids—of a big young man, with pink-and-white cheeks and slow, surprised eyes. An unusual vivacity seized her. The last false note had hardly died away when she disappeared, and returned with a japanned tray on which glowed in a crystal decanter a rose-colored liquid—“Parfait Amour.”

Parfait Amour! Ah, yes—yes.

They all drank pensively, and smacked their lips, and the room was full of the aroma of almonds and wild roses, and Jan Willem, with an appreciative stare at Jillis, asked for

more, and she blushed like a rose as she filled his glass, and he was almost reconciled to music.

Mynheer emerged from these entertainments with a triumphant feeling of having escaped from pitfalls, combined with a wild yearning to produce on his own instrument similar delicious strains. The soul of a music enthusiast of the fiercest sort, unsuspectedly slumbering within him, was roused. His hitherto placid soul was tormented by jealousy as he meditated on the superior merits of his two worthy friends. Mynheer was not only capable of emotion, but emotion that was colossal.

II

WHEN old Rozenboom the sexton died, he left his Italian violoncello — the one sent him by Jonkheer van Loo, because of his unmerited sufferings — to his only daughter Juffrouw Brigitte Rozenboom, who many and many a time had fled from its wailings with cotton in her ears. She was a romantic soul, but she disapproved of music, and so it was with the usual irony of fate that her legacy consisted of this precious instrument. Reck-

oned by the unfulfilled hopes of her heart, Juffrouw Rozenboom was still sixteen. Oblivious to the tweaks of rheumatism, she tripped to the pump as in her girlhood.

In the leisure of doing a little dressmaking she wrote poetry, and over her peat-stove stood the plaster bust of Jacob Cats, the illustrious Dutch poet, crowned with a withered laurel wreath. Such is our low human nature, that it was rumored that the illustrious bard figured in private as a model upon which the inspired lady tried those caps and bonnets that petrified Kitwyk of a Sunday.

Juffrouw Brigitte lived in two rooms so narrow that, had she fainted crosswise in them, she would inevitably have had to be pried out.

The only one in Kitwyk who firmly believed in the lady's poetry was Duffels, for she had in turn greeted nine infant Duffelses with an ode of welcome. Duffels pined to show his gratitude, which hitherto had taken only the form of tidbits of gossip, for the grateful man was the village barber, and his opportunities were many. He was a willing soul, with a propitiatory stoop, and he turned

his hand to anything: condoled, congratulated, and even waited at table with great gentility, in a cast-off coat of an easy fit, the tails of which—such were his elegance and activity!—floated lightly behind him. The nine had abnormal appetites, increased by a steady wading in the green ditches in pursuit of frogs, and Duffels was horribly in debt.

There was Dr. Pynappel, whom he could hardly face because—you understand—of the nine. He had a stupendous cheese debt to Piepenbrink & Co., which he had in vain tried to shave off, and he was under municipal displeasure because of a too sparing use of the pump. His Honor the Burgomaster was pleased to declare the little Duffelses to be a disgrace to Kitwyk, so dirty were their faces. He had graciously emphasized this sentiment by hitting the pendent shirt in the rear of the nearest with his gold-headed cane. So Duffels was crushed by care, and thought it could be no worse; but he did not understand the little tricks of Fate, until Juffrouw Rozenboom inherited the violoncello. This violoncello Dr. Pynappel begrudged its late owner, until he had hated him with considerable enthusiasm. In a weak hour he confided

his hopes and fears to Mynheer Piepenbrink. At the description of the instrument, Mynheer closed his little eyes in ecstasy; he was overcome by his first emotion, and it swept before it all considerations of the superior rights of the enamoured doctor. With a diplomacy for which no one would have given him credit, he sent in all secrecy to Duffels. A cheese debt of long standing should be forgiven Duffels if he would undertake to obtain for Mynheer this precious instrument.

Duffels was already burdened with two secret offers to Juffrouw Rozenboom for her legacy, one in each wooden shoe for safety. The communication from Mynheer he confided to his blue-tasseled night-cap with a groan; for, try as he would, he could not make three aspirants and one violoncello come out right. The vengeance of two would certainly pursue him, and it was a question whether he preferred the wrath of the Burgomaster, the doctor, or Mynheer Piepenbrink.

From behind her muslin curtains Juffrouw Rozenboom overlooked the market-place and William the Silent. She was dusting Jacob Cats as Duffels shuffled in. She dropped

his laurel wreath, and received the three missives. For one blissful moment the blameless lady dreamed, and then—oh, the perfidy of man!

She fell back limp against the plaster linements of the illustrious bard. Three proposals, not for her hand, but for her violoncello!

Duffels turned discreetly away, while she hid her agitated features in the dust-cloth. From this retreat she announced her decision with considerable sharpness:

“Want it, do they? Well, tell them that money won’t buy it, Duffels.”

III

THE announcement that mere money could not prevail on the lady to part with her legacy was a blow. Mynheer Piepenbrink was simply crushed, and his indecision and longing grew to frightful proportions as rumor announced the increased activity of his rivals. Duffels was a very grateful man, and it seemed to him a crime that so poetic a lady should have no opportunities to exercise her talent on herself. As he shaved

Mynheer Piepenbrink one morning, he ventured a bold remark. Armed though he was with a razor, and safe from Mynheer's wrath, he turned pale.

"Of course whoever marries the lady marries, as it were, the violoncello."

There was an awful pause, then a ray of hope illumined Mynheer's gloom. Could he persuade Jan Willem to marry the lady out of duty, and so — unhappily he had educated him with his own horror of anything feminine.

Such was Mynheer's agitation that Duffels refused to shave him, so he resigned himself in silence to the razor.

"A violoncello will last for centuries," said Duffels, "while a woman —" He waved his razor lightly to typify the transitory nature of her career. "What remains? The violoncello." Juffrouw Rozenboom had been heard to cough, and it was on the strength of that cough that the doctor decided to dare anything, Duffels said. As for the Burgo-master, a previous matrimonial experience more than encouraged him. "What they can do, Mynheer can do," and he soaped him tenderly.

"But she can't marry all three of us," groaned Mynheer.

"Mynheer, women are the greatest fools. They 'll believe anything. Tell her you like her, and say nothing about the old fiddle. She 'll marry you, and you 'll have the violoncello, and you 'll have been polite. For she has a tender heart, and it hurts her to think that they only come courting the violoncello.—When it is over he will be thankful," he consoled himself, "and after he is once married he won't know how she looks."

IV

MYNHEER PIEPENBRINK was the victim of passion. In three weeks he had faded to a yellow gray, and his cheeks hung flabby.

Duffels stood before him. A forsaken rusk soaked in a tall china cup, and the only merry thing in the room was the alcohol flame under the tea-urn.

"You are sure you told her that under no circumstances can I possibly come courting?"

"Yes, Mynheer."

"But I am no nearer the violoncello," groaned the distracted man.

"When you are — are married."

"What will Jan Willem say — Jan Willem, who was never to fall in love?"

"But Mynheer is not in love."

"That is true, Duffels."

"Mynheer pines for a violoncello, and the price, as it were, is an estimable lady who is so little attractive that really —"

"But what will Kitwyk and Ketwyk say?" moaned the agonized suitor.

"Mynheer, what does the doctor care, or the Burgomaster! Has Mynheer not noticed their courting? Have they not publicly placed her pail under the pump?"

"O Lord! O Lord! I should die of a wedding!"

"A wedding is not necessary." Mynheer stared aghast. "I mean she will go with Mynheer wherever he wishes to get married."

"Good Lord! that will be an elopement?"

"Oh, no, Mynheer, only a convenience at your age!"

The toils were closing about him.

"This will kill me, Duffels; and what will Jan Willem say?"

"It will be a warning to him, and that is something."

"But — but no courting!"

"There is no need, Mynheer."

"And — and if she insists on having me, she — she — must make all the arrangements herself."

"Yes, Mynheer."

"I — I can't be troubled; my — my pulse — why, I have n't any!" and he pulled a gold turnip out of the pocket of his capacious breeches.

"Perhaps because Mynheer is feeling of the arm of his chair," Duffels suggested mildly; then, as a messenger of love, discreetly withdrew.

Those were terrible days for Duffels! Not only was he obliged to shave Kitwyk, but he had to go courting — and how masterly he did it.

"He is dying to marry you, Juffrouw," he declared rapturously. "He will go with you to the ends of the earth — truly he will. Only name the day."

"How he loves me!"

"Truly he does, strange as it may seem," he assented.

"O Joris, unselfish one!" Then she smiled inquiry on her humble friend. "Sweet are

the messages you bring, Duffels; but why through you?"

"Tell her just what I feel; you will do it so much better than I should,' he always says, Juffrouw."

"But if we never see each other, how are we to—" She paused in modest confusion.

"To get married, Juffrouw? Take him away, and marry him. All he needs is energy."

"Marry him? How, my faithful friend?"

"Leave it to me, Juffrouw. I will bring him at the right time; all you need to do is to be ready."

v

SUMMER glided into autumn; the marsh-grass turned dun color, and there was a hollow, cold twang to the thrum of the bull-frogs. The good folks of Kitwyk acknowledged a change of season by substituting hot grog for cold.

An air of mystery brooded over the musical evenings of Mevrouw van Laan. Young Jillis perpetrated her false notes with a new air of abstraction. Mevrouw still slumbered unconscious while a big young man, planted in

a stiff chair, his great feet creaking on the shiny floor, gazed with wide-open blue eyes at the nape of a white, round neck with its golden tendrils of curls.

Jan Willem did not put his ecstacy into words, but it helped him to survive the music, accompanied though it was by remorse as he gazed at his unconscious uncle. Did he already suspect, and was that the reason that of late he had grown so ill-tempered and haggard? One day he blurted out, "Jan Willem, keep your passions under control!" Jan Willem was about to confess all, but the worthy man had fled, and he was left to ponder on his traitorous design to introduce into their blameless masculine lives a young person with yellow hair and blue eyes. How to undermine the cast-iron principles of his excellent uncle!

He was not the only one who threatened the good man's repose. Since the days of the Spanish inquisition, even in the days of the Spanish inquisition, Kitwyk took an afternoon nap from three to five; not even the terrors of the stake could alter that commendable custom, and the peaceful conscience of Kitwyk was manifested in one simultaneous snore.

The most arrant gossip was then asleep, and it was with perfect security that Juffrouw Rozenboom swayed toward the pump at fifteen minutes past three, in company with her pail. A shadow fell across her path; she started and faltered, but it was only a stray donkey browsing placidly on the grass between the cobblestones. Another shadow—she was not mistaken. Before her stood a bottle-green apparition in yellow breeches and a red face. It was Mynheer Defregge, the Burgomaster, in such agitation that, manlike, he turned his rage on the first object that acted as a safety-valve, which happened to be the innocent grazer, who, unconscious of offense, was pursuing his winding way among the grass tufts, which planted him directly between his Worship and the lady, where he took a stubborn position.

“Shoo!” cried Mynheer Defregge.

The donkey edged a trifle out of the way, and so they met.

“Duffels gave me your message, Mynheer.”

“Have you made up your mind, Juffrouw?”

The lady clasped her hands and looked toward heaven. “It is a great responsibility, Mynheer. I have no one to advise me.

Other young persons have a mother; I — I — have only a heartless brother."

"You have a great-uncle on your mother's side." Mynheer Defregge was always painfully exact. Here the donkey, whether from sympathy, or because he thought the afflicted lady was hiding something especially juicy in the way of grass, butted against her. "Get out of the way!" roared his Honor. "Juffrouw, you have a most miraculous chance! You are not young nor beautiful nor rich," — a light in the lady's pensive gaze might have warned a less exact man. "Mynheer Piepenbrink wishes to marry you — then, in Heaven's name, marry him! But you would be ashamed to enter his house with empty hands. Bless you! money makes no woman less desirable. A gay plumage has made fair many an old bird." This metaphor seemed to strike the lady unfavorably.

"Your proposal is not the only one," she retorted, bridling.

"So there have been others, have there? Well, blexem! I 'll double 'em, and we 'll see what he says to that; for have it I will, Juffrouw, or I'm not Burgomaster of Kitwyk!" And down he thumped his cane, so that the

donkey fled in nervous alarm, and the lady was left alone to pump two or three gallons of water over her feet in the sweet perplexity of her thoughts.

VI

THREE days after, Duffels, with his shaving-tools, appeared before Mynheer, who gazed at him with lack-luster eyes. "And — and — well, Duffels — what?"

"She says she is willing to follow Mynheer to the ends of the earth."

A despairing groan was the only answer to this passionate message.

"And — and you are quite sure there is no other way, Duffels?"

Duffels pinned a towel about the unfortunate gentleman, and lathered away in silence.

"But I — I can't arrange anything; I won't."

"Leave it all to me, Mynheer."

"And, Duffels, tell her — O Lord! O Lord! — that the violoncello must go too; for if I don't see it I shall lose courage. And — and you say she likes me?"

"Adores you, Mynheer."

"Don't put your shaving-brush in my

mouth! Tell her that she must not be — be affectionate. I should die if she were. If I could only take Jan Willem along!" Duffels shook his head, with an air of injured propriety, and Mynheer, with a heartrending groan, resigned himself to the inevitable.

Three days after, the yellow chaise in the barnyard of William the Silent, the only representative of a vehicle of leisure in Kitwyk except the hearse and an ancient glass coach, was roused from an inactivity of a quarter of a century, and scrubbed. A speckled horse with four stiff legs was decoyed into the traces by a measure of hay, and before he had finished his repast he found himself a prisoner.

That afternoon, with his last independent breath, Mynheer Piepenbrink gasped, "If that violoncello is not where I can see it, I shall not go." This message, in sweet disguise, was borne to the lady.

"But, Duffels, if he loves me, why care about such a trifle?" she urged.

"Let him have his way if you want him."

"But, Duffels, my — my trunk."

"There is only room for the violoncello." Duffels was losing patience.



THE COVER OF THE 1900-1901 ALBUM

So Juffrouw Rozenboom resigned her wardrobe in favor of her lover.

It was a chilly autumn night, and the moon glided in and out of a curdled sky. The lane toward Ten Brink was piled high with fallen leaves, and the air was chilly with cold and decay. An unenthusiastic horse trundled a vehicle over the soggy leaves. The chariot pounded slowly along, and the speckled horse, with open pink nostrils, communed with himself, head downward. He was flying toward happiness at the rate of two miles an hour, and that with so pleasing a motion that Duffels, astride his back, was snoring peacefully, with the consciousness of having brought a good matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

The carriage was vastly like a sedan-chair on wheels, with a window on each side and one in front, against which loomed the tail of the speckled steed and the rear of the sleeping Duffels. A silhouette of landscape, wind-mills, sail-boats, and ghostly houses lumbered heavily by, and sometimes the moon peeped in with ladylike discretion. A dark figure cowered in one corner, while the occupant of the other swayed gently toward it.

“Mynheer Joris — my own — will you not speak?”

“No — no,” a strangled voice piped in anguish.

“Eccentric dear!” the lady murmured, with heroic suavity.

Mynheer Piepenbrink cast his eyes in despair on the ponderous case of the violoncello between them. “Don’t — don’t you come any nearer! Little Peter and Paul!” In his anguish he overturned the violoncello, which fell heavily into his arms. He clasped it in a passionate embrace. “One little look at it, Juffrouw, only one.”

“Is it not sufficient to look at the case, Joris dear?” she faltered.

“Why did I ever come?” cried the afflicted gentleman. “Good Lord, help me!” he groaned; and just then, as if divine Providence had nothing else to do than to answer Mynheer’s petitions, there ensued a convulsion of nature, the chariot of William the Silent staggered, reeled, and the next moment plunged into an infernal abyss.

The mottled horse, of course, gave no explanation of the disaster. Duffels was the first to recover himself. He had trusted too much

to the instinct of this worthy steed and the harmony and method of his progress; he had not taken into consideration the tantalizing tufts of grass along the road bordering a ditch, muddy, but fortunately low of water. Uncontrolled by the slumbering Duffels, the excellent quadruped nibbled his way too near the edge, with the above result.

Mynheer, having assured himself that he was still alive, groped out of the ditch, and with the help of Duffels rescued the lady.

They had fallen two feet into the ditch, but for all the purposes of a tragedy it might just as well have been two hundred.

"O Joris, you are not dead!" and she laid her battered bonnet on his unresponsive shoulder.

Mynheer placed his fair burden on the edge of the ditch with more emphasis than affection.

"Good Lord!" he cried suddenly, with something akin to emotion, "where is the violoncello?"

The moon having taken this opportunity to withdraw, the scene was shrouded in gloom, enlivened only by the sobs of the lady and the crunching of the cause of the disaster, as he cropped the grass on the bank.

For fifteen minutes Mynheer struggled with a tinder-box; then, aided by Duffels's lamp, he discovered the beloved form in the ditch, into which, unmindful of danger, he descended.

Juffrouw Rozenboom, on the brink, sat as if petrified until out of the gloom emerged one short, stout figure bearing another. The first was the heroic Joris, the other the precious instrument. He laid it tenderly on the bank.

"If it should have been hurt! O Lord! Open it, Juffrouw!"

"Not now!" she gasped. "I—I—know I am going to faint!"

But pity and Mynheer were strangers; he watched her with a cold and fishy eye. "Open it at once, Juffrouw!" But Juffrouw Rozenboom only moaned and rocked to and fro. "Open it, or I'll—"

The lady shrieked and Mynheer grasped the case weakened by disaster; the battered lock gave way; the moon came out of the clouds; deadly silence; then "Donder and blexem! What in the devil's name do you call this?" and he pulled out just the sweetest sprigged delaine—her wedding-gown, poor dear! It hung all limp from his hand,

and upside down, but his heart was unmoved. "And this?" and out he tore a lovely green coal-scuttle, wreathed, like a young Hope, in pink roses.

The afflicted lady shrieked again as her wardrobe sank at her feet.

"Where is the violoncello, madam?"

"Joris!" — and the lady wrung her hands — "I wanted to be a credit to you on our wedding-day!"

Here Duffels interposed, with an ingratiating smile. "If Mynheer will help raise the carriage we will go on."

"Where is the violoncello, madam?"

She sobbed dismally.

"Where is it?"

"O Joris — I — I — it 's — sold!"

"Sold!"

"I — I was so sure you 'd want me to look nice, and it just bought the sprigged delaine and the bonnet."

Duffels righted the carriage, and backed the unwilling steed into the traces.

"Shall we go, Mynheer?"

"Go where?"

"To Sippken."

"What for?"

"Why, to be married, Mynheer."

"What! I married! I married without the violoncello! Never!"

"O Joris, you have no idea how well I look in that dress!" Juffrouw Rozenboom moaned.

"I married!" he interrupted most cruelly. "Why, but for this blessed accident I should have been sacrificed. I married! I'll be d—— if I will!" And without another word Mynheer turned his back upon his shattered hopes, and with heroic purpose he proceeded to trudge home the two weary miles he had come.

VII

How Duffels returned with the forsaken lady is not stated. The mottled steed, with his knees rasped, and the vehicle were found at midnight hitched to William the Silent.

Long before dawn Jan Willem was roused by a feeble knock at the front door. He listened with commendable prudence for half an hour, then descended in company with a blunderbuss.

"Jan Willem, it is I, Uncle Piepenbrink."

A faint but familiar voice. Jan Willem grasped his musket, and applied his eye to

the keyhole, but saw only what afterward proved to be Uncle Piepenbrink's eye. With heroic firmness he opened the door just a crack, the muzzle of the blunderbuss well out, and staggered back at sight of his own eminently respectable relative standing before him, footsore and dirty.

"Uncle, where have you been?"

"To the devil!" the misguided man all but sobbed.

"When — when did you go?" and Jan Willem followed him up-stairs.

"At fifteen minutes past seven last night."

"Why, then, you don't know — then you have n't seen —"

Uncle Piepenbrink was already staring as at an apparition. It was not the red feather-bed which petrified him, nor the leather arm-chair, nor his carpet slippers, nor the familiar row of clay pipes, but, supported by a chair, languishing against the bed, there stood a violoncello!

Mynheer gasped. Then he spoke:

"What does it mean?"

It was the Rozenboom violoncello. The next moment he held it in his arms.

Jan Willem gazed at the floor with a vague

smile. "I wished to give you a little surprise, uncle. I found out how much you wanted it."

Mynheer took a frightened breath, as one who has been perambulating on the brink of a precipice.

"I thought if I should give you a little pleasure you might — you might —"

"And it is from you, Jan Willem? And I am to have this precious instrument—without her? The Lord be thanked!"

Jan Willem turned pale.

"Oh, no — no — not without her! That is just what I wished to explain, uncle. For, don't you see, I love her, and she loves me, and I thought — that is, she thought —"

"Love her? Got you in her clutches, too? But why was she so ready to fly with me?"

"To fly with you?" and Jan Willem stared, aghast.

"Jan Willem, be warned! At quarter past seven last night she and I were in the chaise of William the Silent, and she would have been Mevrouw Piepenbrink by this time had it not been for circumstances over which, thank God, we had no control."

"Jillis — you and Jillis? Never!" and Jan



JILLIS.

Willem choked with something approaching rage.

“In the devil’s name! I and what? Little Jillis van Laan? Why, the boy is just mad! Blexem! I see! I see! There is no need of being jealous, Jan Willem, for — well! — it was — some one else!”

"Uncle, where have you been?"

Been indeed!

His narrow escape intoxicated him; he was almost lively.

"Been courting, have you? And I was to be bribed, you rogue? Jillis's plan, I'll wager. Yet surprises are dangerous, Jan Willem. But for a special act of Providence you would have had an aunt, to-day,"— he heaved a sigh of gratitude,— "and, after all, a niece is nothing compared to an aunt. So take my blessing, Jan Willem, and close the door,"— which he did in painful perplexity.

Ten minutes after, buried under a mountainous feather-bed, Mynheer forgot the disasters out of which he had so heroically rescued himself.

Mynheer never divulged the solitary romance of his placid career, but he cherished it in secret. Having so nearly sacrificed himself for one of the fine arts, in future he considered himself, with reason, as the patron of all the fine arts as encouraged in Kitwyk. The artist who was intrusted with the new sign-board for William the Silent also painted the portrait of Mynheer playing the Rozenboom violoncello. Henceforth he played with new

feeling which even deceived himself, as if there were a blighted something within him which found its fittest expression when he wailed across the strings long and sad and flat.

JUFFROUW VAN STEEN

1



WHEN Mynheer van Steen of Kitwyk spoke of the great De Keyser of Rotterdam he seemed to melt together in abject humility. There were two things about which he grew almost poetic: a young herring of the first precious batch, unsophisticated and tender, for which his Majesty of Holland gives a gratuity of five hundred guilders, and—Mynheer de Keyser.

Such a herring nestling beside a pickled onion brought tears to his eyes, and he would say, as he gulped down the tenderest part, "If Mynheer de Keyser were only here!" It was understood, if that illustrious man ever did come to Kitwyk, the festivities would be worthy of the distinguished visitor and of Mynheer van Steen. It was Mynheer de

Keyser who bought his tobacco and sold him his groceries, and in his day Nicodemus de Keyser had turned his guilders to so good an account that Van Steen grew quite faint in the contemplation of that rather unsteady signature, representing, as it did, fabulous wealth.

Mevrouw van Steen had faded out of the world after bringing Juffrouw Mettje into existence, the only change for Mynheer being that in future he played his nightly games of cards with his sister, Aunt Jetta. They played for a penny a game, and when he had bad cards he lost his temper, but Aunt Jetta was always placid. Never was the purple bow stirred that rested lightly on the parting of her brown front.

Early in life Aunt Jetta had resigned herself to playing cards with her brother and listening to glowing accounts of how Mynheer de Keyser would be received should he ever come to Kitwyk.

"How I long to see him!" Mynheer cried with enthusiasm. For forty years he had loved and trusted the great man simply by mail. "A man so rich must be good and wise," he exclaimed, and he meant it, did

Mynheer van Steen. The good, the true, and the beautiful were all represented to him by his ideal of Mynheer de Keyser.

One day Mynheer received a joyful shock. It made the sheet of letter-paper in his hand rattle, for the illustrious De Keyser, after certain orders relative to tobacco, added, without false sentiment, postage being dear, that having heard much of the charms of Jufvrouw Mettje van Steen, and being lonely in his big house on the Boompjes, he would do himself the honor of offering her his hand in marriage.

Mynheer sank back in his leathern arm chair in ecstacy; then he rang a hand bell, and Aunt Jetta appeared.

"Mynheer de Keyser—"

"Dear me, dead?" Aunt Jetta suggested placidly.

"Dead!" Here he laughed. "Well, hardly. Prepare yourself for joyful news. Jetta, Mynheer de Keyser desires to marry again."

"Marry again?" Aunt Jetta repeated, and flushed.

"Marry, yes, marry. Be joyful—he wishes to marry our Mettje."

Aunt Jetta folded her hands and was distinctly icy in her joy.



"AUNT JETTA FOLDED HER HANDS AND WAS DISTINCTLY
ICY IN HER JOY."

“Call Mettje!” And Mynheer strode along the polished floor until his felt slippers flapped up and down in agitation.

“How sweet it sounds—Mevrouw de Keyser! Some day—yes, some day I may hope to say to him, ‘Nicodemus.’ There, call Mettje. Imagine her joy!”

“Joy! Humph! Think of his age. Joy? Seventeen and seventy! Well, hardly.”

So short did Mynheer stop in his career that for a second his coat-tails lay outspread on the air.

“Jetta, a De Keyser has no age. He is always beautiful, good, and young. As long as he lasts he is always a princely match. If he had only one leg—in fact, no legs—he would still be more than desirable. Mynheer has, God be praised! all his faculties, and therefore—Jetta, don’t stand staring; call Mettje.”

Mettje looked in at the door, and gave a doubtful glance at the family group.

“If, child, you had a wish granted to you, what should it be?” Mynheer asked solemnly, and beat time with his forefinger on Mynheer de Keyser’s letter.

Mettje leaned her slim back against the door, and considered.

"There are two things."

"But, my dearest child, it can be but one thing."

"Very well, then,"—with a sigh of resignation: "as much apple-sauce as I can possibly eat."

"My innocent child! I knew you would not venture. There, prepare yourself for exceeding joy. A part of this letter relates to you. I will read it: how simple, yet how impressive! 'The last invoice of tobacco was hardly up to—' No, that is n't it. 'Five hundred pounds of better quality.' I am so agitated, I really can't find it. In short, Mettje, he does you the honor to offer you his hand in marriage."

"What?" Juffrouw van Steen cried, and laughed until her brown eyes glistened with tears. "Marry me? I marry Mynheer de Keyser? Why, then I shall have to call him—ha! ha!—Nicodemus."

"True," her father assented respectfully. To him there could be nothing ludicrous about a De Keyser.

"How old is Mynheer?" she asked with sudden gravity.

"Well—in the prime of life, child: seventy or thereabouts."

"Perhaps he might live ten or fifteen years longer, papa?"

"Twenty," her papa assented briskly.

"Ah, dear me! that is just the trouble."

"What — what? Trouble! You — you don't dare to say, suggest — where is your joy? where is your gratitude?"

"As for joy, papa, no matter about that," and Mistress Mettje shrugged her pretty shoulders. "You can say to him, please, that Juffrouw van Steen is deeply grateful, and, having no choice whatever in the matter, she accepts his offer with — with temperate rapture."

Mynheer's suitable and respectful reply was forwarded to Rotterdam by "Trekschuit" (canal-boat) at the rate of about six miles a day, which is as fast as the wings of love can in Holland carry a declaration of passion.

II

A HUNDRED years ago it was a matter of some expense to send a letter; therefore Mynheer van Steen sensibly prefaced his answer with certain business commissions, after which he expressed his joy at the honor Mynheer

conferred on the Van Steen family by desiring to marry Mistress Mettje.

It was young Laurens de Keyser who carelessly broke open the five ponderous seals that hid so much information; then he whistled so long and so loud that the nine other clerks paused in the scratching of their several goose-quills to look up in marked disapproval. The truth was that the only son of De Keyser was a black sheep, criminally indifferent to the whole East India trade. Instead of writing at his desk he preferred to stroll along the canals, his hands in his breeches pockets, his cocked hat on the back of his head, gathering information from every vagabond in Rotterdam. Slowly and stately Mynheer de Keyser's great merchantmen sailed down the Boompjes and anchored at his very front door, and the sight of strange creatures all nimbleness, earrings, and grins, and the pungent smell of the sea, suggesting unknown lands, filled Laurens de Keyser's mind with wild longings for — he hardly knew what.

"Let me see the world, father, sow my wild oats, come back, and be a worthy progenitor of De Keyser's," Laurens urged. "This being an innovation on family traditions, young

Laurens stayed where he was, and became a thorn in Mynheer's flesh.

Instead of writing in the ponderous ledgers he drew fantastic pictures of young females on the precious office paper — young females not without interest to the other clerks, but at sight of whom Mynheer de Keyser and his head bookkeeper shuddered. If it be added that Laurens owned a guitar and sang songs which made the respectable echoes of the old house moan and quake to have to perpetuate anything so lively, it will be acknowledged that as a De Keyser he was a failure.

He smiled as he folded up Mynheer's letter, and murmured, "A nice young person you must be, Mistress Mettje." Then, full of visions of compromise, he knocked at his father's door.

"What do you want, Laurens? More money, more time for idleness, eh?"

The great De Keyser sat in a cubby-hole surrounded by dusty shelves laden with fly-blown bottles of ancient samples of everything under heaven. A shabby desk beside a window that had an unwashed view of brick area and two chairs constituted the furniture of this apartment.

"By no means, father. Here is a letter from Mynheer van Steen."

"About what?"

"Herrings, currants, brown sugar, and"—here Laurens looked encouragingly at his father—"well, yes, and love."

"Love? What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. Now, father, let us take it easily and comfortably." And, to begin, Laurens sat himself astride the chair, folded his arms on the back, and smiled.

"It seems, my dear father, while I am pinning for freedom you are seeking bondage—each to his taste! It is not every son who would gracefully, nay joyously, receive a new mother; but I will do so if—"

"If what?"

"If you will let me go away from here. Give me a little freedom. I have never seen the world. I know nothing, I hear nothing. In a general way, I suppose, God made the world for a De Keyser to trade in, and he made people for a De Keyser to trade with. But, father," he added confidently, "I am so deadly tired of being a De Keyser, I should like a change."

"And this is the son I have brought into



“THE GREAT DE KEYSER SAI IN A CUBBY-HOLE.”

the world!" was all Mynheer could utter, but his eyes threatened a coming storm.

Laurens nodded and sighed. "I wish sometimes you had brought some one else into the world."

"And you dare to suggest a bargain with me? Your freedom for mine! I wish you to understand that if I choose to marry again, you have nothing whatever to say about it."

"But, father, if I go away you will have plain sailing; and if I stay she might draw comparisons — and, after all, father, you have been younger."

"Younger! That I have lived to see this day!"

"I am very glad of it, I am sure; but suppose Mevrouw should fall in love with — me?"

Mynheer turned livid with rage. "Go to the devil! Leave my house! I can get on without you; see if you can get on without me!"

"Do you really mean it?" And Laurens rose to his feet.

"Go to the devil!"

"Ultimately, perhaps; but I mean to stop at one or two places on the way. Good-by, father"; and young Laurens stepped briskly

over the threshold and departed out of the presence of Mynheer.

III

THERE had been times of great public commotion in Kitwyk. The Spaniards in their day had clattered over the highway, and Duke Alva had passed a night in the old town-house on the market-place; but even these circumstances were not so remarkable as to see a young and able-bodied man sitting on a milking-stool in the meadow sketching one of Mynheer van Steen's cows. That any one should do anything but milk a cow was so absurd that the cow was apparently struck by it, for she paused in the chewing of her cud to contemplate the artist. In this she was joined by a small urchin sent to recover the milking-stool, followed by the dairy-maid, a buxom wench in clogs, and on her head a tight, white cap with gold ornaments dangling against her temples.

"Quick, Peter, fetch the Juffrouw," she whispered in open-mouthed wonder, due equally to the art and the artist.

The message reached Mistress Mettje thus:

“Quick, Juffrouw! something is happening to Brigitta, the cow, in the meadow.”

Mynheer was just taking his afternoon nap when Mettje roused him.

“Father, come down to the meadow; something has happened to our Brigitta.” And before he could ask a question she was gone.

Mynheer yawned grievously, took down a rusty old sword, put on his cocked hat, and passed majestically through the kitchen garden to the meadow, where danger threatened Brigitta the cow.

“What are you doing to my cow, young man?” he asked, heroically. For the first time the villain looked up at sight of Mynheer and his drawn sword.

“Making a picture of her—if you don’t mind.”

“Picture of a cow? Bless my soul, what nonsense! What ’ll you do with it, eh?”

“Look at it, Mynheer.”

“Look at the picture of a cow! What for? You can’t cook it or milk it.”

“Perhaps I might sell it.”

“Sell it! Who ’d buy a picture of a cow when he can buy a real one? Listen, Mettje, sell a picture of a cow!” And here he

laughed loud and long, while the artist turned hastily about and discovered three hitherto unperceived critics — a small urchin, a fat servant, and the very sweetest young maid in the world, who gazed at him in the most charming surprise. He had a glimpse of brown eyes and chestnut hair, all gold in the ripples, a silver-gray gown dashed with blush-roses, a narrow black velvet about the white throat, and a full sleeve that showed the fairest round arm.

To be laughed at in her presence was not to be borne. He sprung to his feet, kicked over the milking stool, clutched his sketch, and with a hasty "Pardon my trespassing, Mynheer," turned away just as Mynheer added, with renewed enjoyment:

"Mettje, paint a cow, — sell a painted cow! O Nicodemus de Keyser, what would you say to this?"

The artist of the cow turned to catch a last glimpse of young Mettje. He saw the dimple fade out of her cheek, and she sighed.

"Mettje! Kitwyk! Mynheer de Keyser, to be sure," he thought, filled with wonder and resentment. "Are you Mynheer van



“‘SELL A PICTURE OF A COW!’”

Steen?" he asked with sudden interest. Mynheer van Steen felt that this was fame.

"Truly, I am Hendrik van Steen of Kitwyk, young man. But I don't think you have done Brigitta any lasting harm; so do not be alarmed."

"Then you must know old De Keyser of Rotterdam."

"I know the great Mynheer De Keyser," he replied solemnly, resenting the familiarity of this painter of cows. "May I ask who you are, sir?"

"Well, I—I am his son's very—yes, his very dearest friend."

"A very unworthy young man he is, I have heard—Mettje, don't pull at my coat. Still, he is a De Keyser. As such he will be related to us some day through my daughter Mettje here, the promised wife of Mynheer de Keyser."

The artist of the cow bowed low, and Mettje blushed and dropped a shy courtesy, while the dairy-maid admired this slim and limber young Mynheer.

"And what may your name be, young man?"

"My name, Mynheer? Oh, yes, I—I

quite forgot. It is Zachary Jansen of Rotterdam, at your service."

It appeared that Zachary Jansen had a letter of introduction to Mynheer from Laurens de Keyser, and he brought it to him the very next day. "He is my best and dearest friend, and any kindness you may show to him you show to me," the letter read. Whereupon Mynheer took, as it were, a serpent to his unsuspecting heart.

Young Zachary was entertained in a manner peculiar to Kitwyk. Hours at a time he was invited to sit on the settle before Mynheer's front door, from where there was an exhilarating view of the town-pump. Indeed, in a burst of hospitality Mynheer nearly invited his young friend to Sippken on his canal-boat.

"Haste hastens life," Mynheer liked to say; nevertheless as a rich Dutch merchant he set up a canal-boat of his own with a big, philosophic horse to trundle it down the stream, and so resigned himself to travel at the rate of a mile an hour, and hoped it might not be tempting Divine Providence.

A sybarite could yearn for no greater luxury than to sail on a trekschuit with its cozy

cabin, lace curtains to the windows, plants on the sills, easy-chairs on deck, and a faint line of smoke curling out of the chimney to suggest culinary possibilities. However, Mynheer had never dallied with the fates more than once, when he went to Sippken, six miles beyond Kitwyk. On this occasion, well wrapped up, with a stiff glass of grog at his elbow, a pipe in his mouth, and a box of hot charcoal under his feet, he sailed all alone down the canal, and discovered that the world is pretty much the same.

However, when he really thought of undertaking this perilous adventure again, his heart failed him; and so young Zachary's amusement in the society of Mynheer continued to be a joyous contemplation of the town-pump.

IV

OLD JASPAR was sent over to William the Silent to fetch Zachary's belongings. He returned with a varied collection, among them even a guitar tied with blue ribbons, which caused considerable consternation to the maid who did the chamberwork; even Mettje was perplexed until Aunt Jetta ex-

plained. Out of the ashes of remembrance she produced a faint glow.

"I once knew a young Mynheer who



JANUAR.

played on just such a thing under my window," she sighed.

"What for?" Mettje asked in surprise.

"To tell me, my dear child, that — ah — that he loved me."

"Does playing on that always mean that a young Mynheer is in love?" Mettje spoke with evident anxiety.

"Yes, nearly always."

"Why did he play outside of the window? He might have taken cold."

"He never did recover," and Aunt Jetta sighed heavily.

"Of what, poor aunt?"

"You see, child, your grandfather was deaf, a man of violent passion, sudden purpose, and he lived only for his tulips. One night he thought he heard something move among them —"

"Dear Aunt Jetta!"

"He turned the watering-pot on them — on him. He was drenched — he died."

"From the shock, dear Aunt Jetta, that night?"

"Not quite." Aunt Jetta heaved a sigh. "It was thirty years after, but I always felt sure it was the cause of his death." And she dusted the guitar and felt a gentle interest in young Zachary.

"I wonder if any one has played before Billa's window?" Mettje mused.

Billa de Groot was her dearest friend and the most enterprising young person in Kitwyk. She had been to Rotterdam, from which she brought fashions that made Kitwyk

groan. One day a coffin-shaped box came by canal-boat and was borne into the De Groot house. Immediately after awful sounds broke the stillness, so that worthy burghers in passing paused and shook their heads. It was said that these sounds had a great deal to do with defeating Nicholas de Groot's heart desire to be Burgomaster of Kitwyk.

Mynheer de Groot had little to say in his own house, and that saved him a great deal of exertion. He liked to smoke his long clay pipe, sit at the window, and watch the canal-boats pass, and he rejoiced to think that he was not on one. Mynheer was not so grateful for what he had in life as for what he avoided. Sometimes when he had the energy he wished some one would kindly marry Billa and take her and her piano away; and just when it did seem to him as if no one would come to his rescue, the maid one afternoon ushered Mynheer van Steen into the sitting-room.

"What?" Mynheer de Groot murmured.

"Yes," said Mynheer van Steen. Then there was a long pause, during which Billa's father took a short nap, from which he was aroused by these extraordinary words: "Will

you bestow on me the hand of Juffrouw Billa? I shall be very lonely when Mettje marries.

"Do you mean it?" Mynheer de Groot asked tremulously. Mynheer van Steen to marry Billa — and the piano! "My dear friend, my dearest friend, take her, and God bless you!" and he spoke hurriedly for the first time in his life. Then it occurred to them to notify Juffrouw Billa of her good fortune. The piano was still sounding overhead. The two old gentlemen shuddered at the harmonies, and Mynheer gazed at the bold suitor with a wan smile.

"Don't be alarmed. I have no fear. We will change all that. The late Mevrouw van Steen obeyed me like a — a lamb."

Mynheer de Groot vanished, the piano stopped with a crash, but in hardly more than a moment he reappeared, quivering, undone; even his lower lip trembled.

"What ails you? Where is your daughter?"

"My dear, dear friend." Here he dropped into the nearest chair and groaned.

"What — speak out."

"It — it — cannot be."

"What are you talking about?"

"Billa — dear God in heaven, that I should have to say it! Billa — will — not."

What, he, Hendrik van Steen jilted—tossed aside by a fool of a girl?

Mynheer spoke never a word more, but he seized his cocked hat and cane, slammed the door behind him, and vowed vengeance.

v

MYNHEER ZACHARY was a great acquisition, and he made himself infinitely agreeable. As he had much tact and unlimited spare time, he talked with Mynheer about investments, herrings, and De Keyser; with Aunt Jetta about poetry and cooking (for she loved both); and he helped Juffrouw Mettje to water the plants and cut the fruit in the kitchen garden.

Dare to say there is no sentiment in a kitchen garden! Did not Mettje sit on the bench under a peach-tree and stare at a fat yellow pumpkin and feel that her heart was breaking?

Strange to say, every afternoon before this, while Mynheer van Steen took his nap, and Aunt Jetta's front reposed on a bust with

out features, Mettje with her garden basket on her arm met Zachary in the kitchen garden, and he helped her to gather — vegetables. No sentiment, indeed! Why, a field of vegetables is as full of poetry as the desolate moors. Oh, Teltower turnips and tender carrots, Brussels sprouts, poetry of cabbage, melons in golden ripeness, and great black grapes with a purple blush! Pumpkins heavy but precious, yellow pears mellowing in the sun, and peaches as rosy as Mettje's cheeks. No sentiment, indeed! There was even shadow to bring the sunlight into relief, for Mettje's heart was heavy because Zachary did not come.

Mynheer van Steen, who abhorred music, was awakened the very next afternoon by the tinkle of a guitar. At first he thought it was an aggressive fly, but at last he traced the obnoxious sound to Mynheer Zachary's chamber overhead, and when that sinner strolled in for his afternoon cup of tea Mynheer remarked that he should advise his young friend to cultivate the acquaintance of Billa de Groot, as she made just the same damnable noise.

Then the awful secret was divulged, and Mettje heard it.

"Juffrouw de Groot, my old friend from Rotterdam? I have seen her very often since I came here. She played to me yesterday afternoon."

Here Mettje's hand shook so as she passed the tea-cup to Zachary that it played a tune of its own on the saucer. So, while she had waited in vain in the kitchen garden, he was leaning over that dreadful box on spindle legs and gazing into Billa's eyes!

Mettje hid behind the tea-kettle and was very wretched. Just then Zachary asked for more tea, and as he held out his cup he tried very artfully to touch her slim fingers with his own. I do not say that he had never before succeeded, only this time Mettje drew herself up with great dignity. But when she returned the cup he looked so reproachfully, so beseechingly at her, that she wished she had taken firmer hold of the saucer even at the risk of meeting the hurried touch of his hand, for it fell with a crash and inundated the tea caddy, the cookies, the dish of rock-candy, and the sacred tea-cloth, and just then the maid came in with a letter which she placed at Mynheer's side on the window-sill. Then like a crack of doom sounded his voice.

"Mettje, my child, rejoice. Mynheer de Keyser is coming next week. In the meantime he sends you the expression of his profound esteem."

With one accord Mettje's eyes met Zachary's. She forgot her anger and pain, everything but that this was the end, and the roses faded out of her cheeks, and her lips trembled.

"Aha, young man, you will meet Mynheer under particularly pleasing circumstances. He shall help you at my recommendation." And all day long Mynheer went about the house murmuring, "Nicodemus, Nicodemus de Keyser, my son-in-law." He put his nose into every pot and pan, and was discovered shining the little mirror in the guest room with the tail of his dressing gown. In short, his one thought was to make everything worthy of the illustrious advent of Nicodemus de Keyser.

In the midst of the expectant joy young Zachary's face wore a look of profound gloom, so that at last Mynheer van Steen remonstrated.

"What ails you, young man? Be happy Mynheer de Keyser is coming."

Here Zachary groaned, and leaned against

the table and played a tattoo on the shining mahogany. "The truth is, I must go away."

"Oh, is that all?"

"All!"

"Well, you could not expect to stay for ever: the best of friends must part." At this juncture Mynheer burst into a gruff "Haw! haw!" while Zachary stared at him in surprise.

"Young man, do you think that I am a fool? Don't you suppose I know that something ails you? Shall I guess?"

"Guess!"

"Think I am blind, eh? Well, not of late years! Young man, you are — ha! ha! — in love."

"In love, Mynheer?"

"Such things have happened before — it's no crime," and he wagged his old head.

"You are right," and Zachary appeared resigned. "I am in love."

"So, while she played 'Bang, bang, bang,' and you 'Twang, twang, twang,' Cupid flew between, eh? Why to Heaven, you fool, don't you marry her?"

Zachary seated himself in the nearest chair and contemplated his worthy friend.



METTJE.

"Marry her? That 's not so easy."

"Does n't she know?"

Zachary sighed.

"Of course she knows; I thought so. Then, in Heaven's name, of what are you afraid?"

"Well, of — her father."

"Of her father? A nice lover you! Don't be a milksop! There, we 'll speak without sentiment. I know the young person, and I have reason to believe that her father is dying to get rid of her. He loves her, of course, but still she is too lively for him. Here is your chance."

"But, Mynheer, I have neither money nor position."

"Bah! He has enough for all. Listen. What is done cannot be undone."

"I know, but I do not see the connection." Young Zachary lacked imagination.

"She is his only child; he will forgive her even if she marries you against his will. He must relent — I will intercede," and Mynheer slapped his honest breast.

Zachary leaned back and gazed at him with sparkling eyes.

"So you advise me to — to —"

"I advise nothing. All I say is, the inevitable cannot be undone, and he will relent."

"But the going—that is not so easy."

"Listen, Zachary. I will give you a proof of my friendship. You shall have my trekschuit, Jaspar, and the horse whenever you wish. Jaspar shall ask no questions; he rarely speaks, and he never thinks."

"My more than father! Who would have thought to find so much sentiment in so serious a man!"

"Sentiment? I believe you! Wait until you see the trekschuit and the little cupboards for rum and gin, and a charcoal stove. Nothing wanting—all my own inventions. True sentiment remembers that man must eat and drink. God bless you, my boy! The boat shall be ready whenever you are."

This being a true history, it must be confessed that no sooner was Zachary in the corridor than he shook with suppressed laughter, while on the other side of the door Mynheer sank back in his arm-chair and roared until the tears rolled down his fat cheeks.

"And so the piano was too much for you, Nicholas de Groot? Now we shall see how you like that other damnable instrument; and

this time, Mynheer, it is — ha! ha! — forever.”

The next day Zachary confided to his benevolent friend that he was ready.

“Ah, you sly dog, when do you want the trekschuit? You see I am a man of my word.”

“At five o'clock to-morrow morning.”

“Five o'clock!” Mynheer cried in dismay. “Why, old Jaspar never got up at five o'clock in his life. He could n't and he would n't.”

“Shall my life's happiness wreck on old Jaspar?” Zachary demanded with some resentment.

“Why at five? Make it nine.”

“We shall get no start. If we go at five no one but you will know, and when they miss us about ten o'clock, why, don't you see, there is n't a horse in Kitwyk fast enough to overtake us?”

“That is true. I will do more. I will bribe Jaspar, he shall have a new snuff-box. But one thing I cannot do: I cannot see you off.”

“God forbid!” Zachary cried in alarm. “That would n't do at all.”

“Well, then, God be with you! We've

all been young in our day. Aha, you sly rogue, you!"

VI

THE eventful day dawned like any other day except that Mettje had a headache, so Aunt Jetta said. Mynheer shook his head in disapproval and ate his breakfast in silence. He ate five meals in marked displeasure, and after a hearty supper he and Aunt Jetta sat down for their nightly game of cards.

"I am glad, Jetta, when Mynheer de Keyser takes the child off my hands," he cried irritably.

"Did it ever occur to you that Mynheer is a little old for Mettje?"

"Old? Jetta, don't you make me angry!" And down he flung his cards.

"Yes, old," Aunt Jetta repeated stoutly. "There, take up your cards and play."

"I tell you a De Keyser is never old."

"Very well, then; he has been younger. She will never love him."

"Love — love? Did I ever love Mevrouw? Never! But did n't we live in peace and comfort?"

"You did."

"Will you hold your tongue, Jetta?"

"There, yes, I 'll stop. Take up your cards and play."

Mynheer obeyed, though boiling with rage, but as he had good cards the wrath in his face gave way to a look of pleasing excitement, in the midst of which some one knocked with the knocker against the front door.

"Some one to see Mynheer," the maid announced briefly.

"This is no time to come. Can't see any one." And Mynheer did not even look up from his cards.

"Shall I tell him to wait, Mynheer?"

"Tell him to go to the devil. No, tell him to wait. I am busy just now."

"He looks accustomed to waiting," the handmaid volunteered, and departed. Mynheer played on. Half an hour passed, the luck began to turn, and Mynheer lost his temper. The door opened once more. "If you please, Mynheer, he is still waiting. He would be glad if—"

"Get out! Tell him pretty soon. Impudent beggar. Beggar, is n't he?"

"Probably, Mynheer. He is shabby enough."

"Tell him to come to-morrow," Mynheer commanded petulantly, and continued to play until there came another knock at the door.

"Come in, and be hanged!" he roared, and dashed his cards on the table until everything shook.

On the threshold appeared a little old man in shabby clothes, faded and snuff-strewn. He held a cocked hat under his arm, and he looked inquiringly at Mynheer.

"How dare you disturb me? What do you want? Did n't I tell you to come to-morrow? Am I to have no peace in life — am I always to be pestered? What — what — who — who?" Mynheer gasped, deprived of breath.

The little ancient man came a step nearer "I am anxious to speak to you. I have something of importance to say and to find out —"

"The old story!" Mynheer cried, in unrepressed scorn. "What is your name?"

"Pardon my forgetfulness. I forgot — as people always know me. I am Nicodemus de Keyser of Rotterdam."

Mynheer van Steen was prostrated. Even

Aunt Jetta stared at the stranger quite aghast.

“I came sooner than you expected for certain reasons.”

“Heavenly powers!” moaned Mynheer van Steen. Here he revived, leaped to his feet, flung his arms about the struggling visitor, and kissed him on the top of his wig.

“Nicodemus de Keyser, the great, the rich De Keyser, so to receive a De Keyser!” Whereupon he thrust him into his own arm-chair, placed a cricket under his feet, then with a flash of inspiration he cried:

“Call Mettje. She is longing to see Mynheer. Hurry, Jetta!”

“Hendrik, do not forget that she is ill,” Aunt Jetta remonstrated, and folded her hands on her knees; but the great De Keyser interposed shortly, “First disagreeables, then pleasures. Sit down, Mynheer; you make me nervous. I have reasons for coming without notice and not giving my name. You may know that I have a son.”

Mynheer bowed with respectful commiseration.

“He has run away. We parted in anger. He was traced to Kitwyk. Has he been here? I must see him—speak to him.”

"No, he has not been here; only a very pleasing young friend of his who brought me a warm letter of introduction from your son. To be recommended by a De Keyser is sufficient; this humble abode has been his home for three weeks. Perhaps you may know him — Zachary Jansen of Rotterdam."

"Never heard of him. Where is he now?"

"Ha! ha! a sly young dog. I have reason to believe that he has gone on a pleasure excursion, in what I guess to be rather pleasant company. You understand, Mynheer; but boys will be boys — ha, ha!"

"Describe this reprobate to me, you old fool!" Mynheer de Keyser roared.

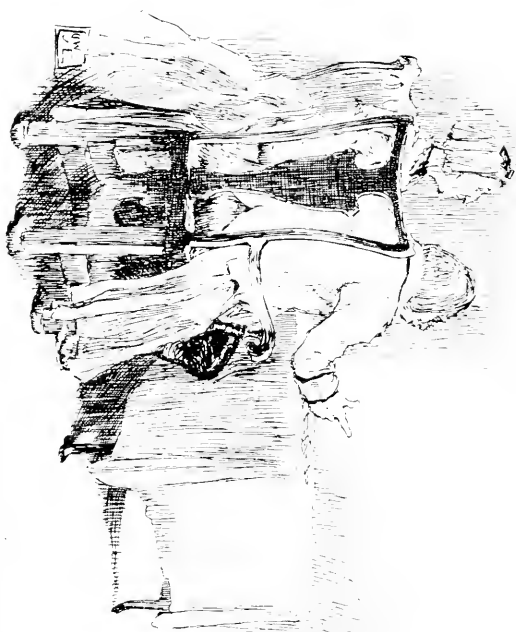
Mynheer van Steen quaked. A terrible illumination broke upon him, and it was Aunt Jetta who placed a neat silhouette before Mynheer de Keyser.

"That is Zachary: he had it cut for me at the 'kirmess' last week," she explained.

"As I thought — my son."

Mynheer van Steen grew faint with rage as he thought how he had helped Juffrouw de Groot to a De Keyser, no matter how unworthy.

"And is it this young man who is taking



“THE MAN WHO WAS KILLED BY THE KISSER.”



a country excursion with — oh!" the indignant father cried, and strode up and down the room.

"Call Mettje! She must come, Jetta, I tell you she must come," Mynheer cried. He would lighten the blow by producing a counter attraction. "Yes, you shall see Mettje! Forget this wretched young man. I will fetch her."

"Hendrik, consider she is ill," and Aunt Jetta barred the way.

"Let me pass!"

"Then in God's name!" And the old lady sank into the nearest chair and grasped the arms for support.

"Something awful is going to happen. O Mynheer de Keyser, be merciful! She was too young for you."

"What are you talking about? Are you all mad?" But before she could explain Mynheer burst into the room, an open letter in one hand and a dripping candle in the other.

"Mynheer de Keyser," was all he could say as he fell into a chair and dropped the candle on the floor, "Read."

"My dear father," Mynheer de Keyser

read, "forgive me—I love him—I cannot live without him—when this reaches you I—I shall be the happiest girl in Holland, for I shall be the wife of Laurens de Keyser."

"Mynheer van Steen, how is this? You knew that my son had eloped with your daughter?"

"Oh, no, no!" Mynheer groaned. "It is a horrible mistake. I thought—I had reason to think he loved Juffrouw de Groot. It was she I suspected—and she has been missing all day," and he held his head in his hands and rocked to and fro.

Just then Jaspar looked cheerfully in at the door. "I've come back, Mynheer. Mynheer Zachary sends his love and his best thanks. He said it was the happiest day of his life; so did the Juffrouw."

"Juffrouw—what Juffrouw?"

"Why, Juffrouw Mettje, of course."

"Blockhead! And you let your master's daughter run away in a boat with this villain, and you did n't try to bring her back, even if—if you had to knock him down?"

This was too much for old Jaspar.

"Did n't you tell me to take no notice?" he demanded in righteous resentment. "Did

you not say to me, 'Whatever you see or hear, Jaspar, don't be surprised. Don't ask questions, don't notice the young folks. It is all right'? And I will say, it was pretty hard not to be surprised when I saw Mynheer Zachary lift Juffrouw Mettje into the boat. She was all rosy red and ready to cry, but young Mynheer kissed her, and I heard him say: 'It 's all your dear father's doing. If it had n't been for him we never should have got away. You see it is God's will, Mettje.' So she wiped her eyes and was very happy."

"It 's all a lie!" Mynheer shouted, but Jaspar's composure was not to be ruffled.

"And, if you please, here 's a letter from Mynheer Zachary," he added, and departed.

The letter was addressed to Mynheer de Keyser when he should arrive in Kitwyk.

"Later, Mynheer, you will explain to me your connection with this wretched affair," he said sternly, and then he opened the letter.

My dear father [Laurens wrote], you were very unwise not to take my advice. Had you granted me my wish, Mettje, instead of being my dear wife, as she will be when this reaches you, would have been my revered mother. If you knew my enchanting Mettje you would understand that I prefer her in her present character. You must

know I strayed to Kitwyk out of sheer idleness, besides I was curious to see the young person who was willing to be my step-mother. The first thing I did was to fall in love with her. It is not my fault: it is Mettje's, and even you will forgive when you see her. After all, she remains in the family, and that is a great thing. Above everything thank Mynheer van Steen for the happiness he has conferred upon us. Without his aid Mettje and I would still be pining in Kitwyk, and instead we are sitting side by side in the snuggest cabin in the world, and Mettje's head is on my shoulder. O father, if you could only see the roses in Mettje's cheeks! Tell Mynheer that the cupboards were all he described—he was too thoughtful! The gin was particularly good—good as the advice and help of Juffrouw de Groot, which, next to his own, helped to support Mettje and me in this trial. Had I not already chosen Mettje, I might have followed his excellent counsel and taken Juffrouw de Groot, but even Mettje thought we'd better not change our plans. It is the loveliest morning that ever dawned—made just for Mettje and me. As soon as I have sealed this letter I shall send it back by Jaspas and the boat. Father, don't say that I did not warn you! I said she might fall in love with me

and I have just asked her. She looked up at me with her brown eyes, and then she hid her sunny head on my breast and said—Father, pray forgive the blots, for I dropped the pen to—no matter! You were once young yourself and courted Mevrouw, my dear mother, and you know how it is. Forgive me, and some day open your heart again. You have had your romance, probably: forgive me mine. If you only knew what I have to live for now you would believe me when I say that from this day I shall be another man.

LAURENS DE KEYSER.

Mynheer de Keyser slowly folded the letter and gazed in profound scorn at Mynheer van Steen. The pause that followed was simply appalling, but Aunt Jetta broke it.

“Mynheer de Keyser,” she began quite calmly, “believe me, you have escaped a great misfortune. What did you, an old man, want of a young wife? She would have ruined the last of your life. Be grateful that your son saw her before it was too late for you both. You cannot be heart-broken, for you have never seen my niece. To be sure, your son has run away with a pretty girl, but under other circumstances this marriage would have been satisfactory to you. Therefore take my advice, forgive and forget. Return to Rotterdam and receive those children with open arms, and rejoice that your son has chosen the wife of his heart. As for you, brother,”—and Aunt Jetta turned sharply upon him where he sat crushed and subdued,—“you seem the victim of a mistake. I will not try to guess why you wished the charming Billa to run away with a young man of whom you knew nothing. As it was Mettje, however, who went instead, I will tell you that I also helped her to escape from a fate an older per-

son would have welcomed." Here Aunt Jetta courtesied and Mynheer de Keyser bowed low. "Consider that, as Laurens says, she remains in the family; and so, if Mynheer will graciously forgive, you certainly should, for," Aunt Jetta concluded dryly, "it was all your fault."

"If Mynheer de Keyser will forgive," the culprit faltered.

"After all," said the great De Keyser, "it might have been worse, for I shall not have to worry in future about getting him married. Your sister," he concluded, in an admiring undertone, "is a very sensible person."

Indeed, in the course of a week he found her so much to his taste that when he returned to Rotterdam it was in company with a new *Mevrouw de Keyser*. To be sure, not the one he went in search of; but, as he said with great satisfaction to Laurens, when that young man returned from his wedding journey with *Mevrouw Mettje*, it was all right, for they had remained in the family. Thereupon he pinched *Mettje's* cheeks until the child glowed like a peach, and he pinched his own *Mevrouw de Keyser's* until she glowed like a winter apple. In the course of time

Mynheer Laurens became a famous merchant, and he ended as Burgomaster of Rotterdam. From being slim he grew portly, and when he was in good humor he liked to talk of his travels. The best journey he had ever taken was, he always declared, on a trekschuit. "Eh, Mevrouw Mettje?" he would cry, and to her last day Mevrouw always hung her head and blushed.

"What is your opinion, Mettje? Were you ever sorry?"

"No, Mynheer—if you were not."

THE WILD HUNTSMEN OF KITWYK

"AFTER work, pleasure!" said the Burgomaster, and invited his town-council to go hunting.

Kitwyk was aghast. Hunting? Such a thing had n't been known since the memory of man.

The day before the great event, Bleeker, the town notary, called on each of the prospective guests; it was rumored that in preparation for this joyful occasion the favored six had just made their wills. It did seem to Kitwyk as if it might have been spared this trial, considering. The vacant pulpit of Kitwyk was at last filled by a Dominic, but Kitwyk had not yet recovered from the fatigue of choosing him. He was the candidate of Mynheer van Steen, and Juffrouw Defregge's young dream was realized as he stood in the pulpit in his flowing black gown, in the midst of garlands of paper roses lavishly twined

about the altar by the righteous; and when he thumped the pulpit cushions, he all but thumped on Juffrouw Toni's heart as she sat with folded hands, her blue eyes sparkling.

On one point the guests were unanimous: dangers they might have to face, but they 'd be hanged if they would do it afoot. Then, too, what was there to shoot? The only game known to Kitwyk was cows.

It was suspected that Duffels knew,—he was closely interrogated.

Was there danger in the proposed sport?

“Not unless Mynheer Piepenbrink falls over his own sword,” he replied as he shaved that worthy man, who declined to go hunting with any other weapon because of a holy horror of fire-arms.

It was an early autumn morning. The cocks had barely crowed when Kitwyk was up and the town-pump in active operation. Presently the victims appeared, followed by the maid-servants bearing the implements of destruction, muzzle downwards, as if for a funeral.

Mynheer Piepenbrink, with heroic resignation, carried his sword, which got fatally entangled in his spurs. They all wore spurs

and jack-boots in honor of the occasion, and Mynheer de Groot, to protect himself from the bullets of his friends, wore the helmet of one of his ancestors. With a rattle of arms and a jingling of spurs they leaped aboard the canal-boat. Mynheer de Groot, wisely deciding that there was no immediate danger, took off his helmet and mopped his head.

Duffels unmoored the slow horse, Mynheer van Steen's Jaspar grasped the wheel, and so they started.

On deck, around a table, stood seven arm-chairs. Not only were jars of tobacco provided and long clay pipes, but the kettle was boiling on the brass stove, while several high-shouldered bottles made a friendly picture in the midst of yellow lemons and blue Delft sugar-bowls.

It was the first sight that touched them,—they smiled.

Mynheer Piepenbrink relinquished the grasp of his sword; he was about to sink into the nearest chair when a fatal discovery was made: the jack-boots of the Seven Years' war were so petrified by time that it was impossible either to sink or sit,—they were all

immolated in the cast-iron embrace of their boots. There was a ghastly silence.

The trekschuit trundled along, only slowing up when the worthy steed was tempted by something very juicy in the way of grass.

In this supreme emergency Mynheer Defregge uttered these bold words: "Let 's take them off!"

An instructive sight it was to see their mutual helpfulness. With one to hold and another to pull each was in turn released, and the winds of heaven played over their stocking-feet as they drank grog in silent gratitude.

As a hunting party it was too hastily declared to be a distinct success.

"Blexem!" cried their host, "this is not hunting!"

"What is there to hunt, Mynheer Defregge?" it was Jonkheer van Loo who broke the painful silence.

"I have created wild beasts." Mynheer Defregge spoke in conscious triumph.

It was a pleasant, uncertain day. The sunlight was tempered by soft, opal clouds; the blue of the sky was touched by gray.

The trekschuit bumped up to the bank, the horse was hitched to a post, but it was obvi-

ous at once that a hunting-party in stocking-feet was too bold an innovation.

The fourteen martial boots that clambered heavily over the side of the boat probably never contained more concentrated suffering.

"Be sure and be back at six, Jaspas, without fail." They were all homesick. They stood on the bank and watched the trekschuit bump off, then they were alone in a wilderness,—as far as the eye could reach they saw only a long, dull, green expanse of cabbages.

Mynheer Defregge led his suffering guests through a hobbly foot-path, and their spurs got entangled in the grass. He turned on them in triumph: "This is our hunting-ground—the game is about us!"

It was a terrible shock! Game—wild beasts! Heaven only knew with what they were surrounded. They had read of tigers and hyenas.

Mynheer Defregge alone was unmoved. "Duffels," he cried sternly, "what is this?" He pointed to the nearest bunch of cabbages, under whose shadow, placidly nibbling a leaf, sat a big white rabbit. "Why is he so tame?"

Duffels scratched his ear. "Because he is so happy, Mynheer."

"He has no business to be happy," cried his Worship. "How can we hunt him when he won't run?"

The huntsmen breathed more freely.

"Your Worship, the fields are full of them, and they are desperately wild," said Duffels.

Mynheer de Groot took Duffels aside: "You are sure that they are all rabbits? Something of a more dangerous—might—might have—"

"It was only rabbits that Mynheer Defregge set out in the spring," Duffels answered. "There were four of them; these are — ahem — their children."

Far in the distance rose a modest clump of trees. With sinking hearts they found that this was their destination.

No one, unless he has tried, knows the agony of walking in jack-boots and spurs across a stubbly field, dragging a blunderbuss.

Mynheer de Groot puffed along carrying his helmet. Mynheer Piepenbrink paused to feel of his pulse. But the worm will turn,—with one accord they stopped.

"We won't go any farther! Do you call this hunting?" for a great, fat rabbit skipped

between the legs of Jonkheer van Loo and tripped him up.

"Duffels, the very same rabbit! What does he mean by being so familiar?"

"He's one of the old ones, and he feels very much at home here; the others are very wild, I assure you."

With sinking hearts they jogged along, and just as they were about perished they reached the little grove. Here another appalling sight burst on them. On a low platform, as on an altar, something lay hidden, covered by a long white sheet. Hopeless and forsaken they stood in a great waste of cabbages. The rabbits sat on the outskirts and pricked up their long ears. Then it was that Mynheer Piepenbrink turned to flee, and Mynheer de Groot grasped his helmet.

"What?" and Mynheer van der Velde shuddered.

Mynheer Defregge smiled benignly. They paused.

"Calm yourselves, there is no danger. See!"

It was only an innocent sucking-pig resting on a rude oven, a smile on his fat face.

Their spirits rose like magic. The Burgo-master basked in the sunshine of popular ap

proval. There were benches, too, under the trees, and many precious things appeared out of Duffels's basket. It was, however, discovered that Dr. Pynappel of Ketwyk had thoughtlessly gone hunting with no other weapon than an umbrella. He basely used it as an excuse to decline the sport; in fact, he put an end to all discussion by taking off his boots. For a moment it seemed as if the bad example would prove contagious.

The Burgomaster was in despair. "You shall go hunting — I 'll be hanged if I sacrifice a meadow for nothing! Are you ready?"

It then appeared that Mynheer van Steen and Mynheer de Groot had left their ammunition in the trekschuit, which was half way to Kitwyk by this time. But go they had to, all the same.

Dr. Pynappel was left in charge of the pig. As a scientific man he examined the contents of the baskets and turned the spit to see how it worked.

He even extended his sympathy to the rabbits who nibbled their way into view, unaware of the immolation prepared for their kindred. Then, like a warrior, with his boots

for a pillow, he stretched himself on a bench and fell asleep. Immolation, indeed!

Do you know what it is to go hunting and have the game whisk between your legs?

Lions and tigers, indeed!

Did any man ever endanger his existence by tripping over a tiger and being nearly impaled on his own sword, as happened to Mynheer Piepenbrink?

He would not be left to recover, but proceeded slowly, leaning on the arm of Mynheer de Groot, holding a red bandana handkerchief to his nose.

As for Mynheer Defregge, he was rapidly losing patience. "Good Lord! why don't you shoot?" he cried.

"The — the — beasts are so near we can't take aim!"

"Then I'll shoot." Mynheer Defregge was purple with wrath. "Get out of the way, can't you?"

It was a terrible moment. Where should they flee to escape destruction? At what would the heroic man aim?

Not to witness the slaughter, they closed their eyes. Mynheer de Groot and Mynheer Piepenbrink put their fingers in their ears.

Bang! Bang!—Then two distinct roars of anguish. It was not the stricken prey, it was their friend Jonkheer van Loo crushed under the outstretched form of the Burgomaster.

Jonkheer van Loo with splendid confidence had stationed himself directly behind his friend. But Mynheer's musket kicked backwards with such fatal accuracy that he fell against Jonkheer van Loo, who sank with his whole weight on a very noble winter cabbage.

"They are destroyed," cried Mynheer van Steen, and the possibility of being the next burgomaster flashed through his mind as he helped raise the stricken men.

What should they do? Three of them already disabled. They stood midway in a forlorn plain; the canal lay in the dim distance; a lowering sky, a rising breeze,—and impassable ditches cut them off from the habitations of men. They gazed at the distant trees where their friend, the doctor, was waiting for them. Wistful smiles broke over their worn faces as they also remembered the pig.

"Let us go back," said Jonkheer van Loo.

"I—I—must shoot something!" the Burgomaster remonstrated.

But they would n't let him. He had proved his valor. "Duffels, I must at least know how many I have destroyed," but Duffels discovered no victims.

So they lifted their valiant feet and trudged back through the cabbages, and it must be acknowledged that the destruction they inflicted on that excellent vegetable was simply immense.

"What has happened?" the doctor cried aghast. As a scientific man he wasted no words, he simply brewed a jorum of grog and whisked the covering from the little pig. It was sufficient, they smiled once more.

"Light the fire, Duffels, and let him roast," said the Burgomaster.

Who has not noticed, when dead-tired and hungry, the tantalizing aroma of roast pork on the cold air!

The little pig seemed to enjoy it himself,—he smiled, as if he knew how good he was going to taste.

They all took off their boots; their united eyes were fastened on the tender young creature. Mynheer Piepenbrink was bending forward, bathed in that divine aroma, when he gave a cry of dismay—a drop of rain had fallen on his nose.

It could not be! Divine Providence could not be so cruel in the face of that young creature browning to perfection, and they so ferociously hungry!

There was no escape—the oven stood exposed to the blasts of heaven. The clouds lay in heavy dull-gray masses, the sea of cabbages stretched out like lead. There were ghostly squeaks and scamperings,—a hissing sound—the rain spluttered on the little pig. The Burgomaster tore his hair. Despair seized them, just as the doctor, like one inspired, raised his umbrella—the pig was saved.

Each heroic soul held the umbrella until exhausted.

It was Mynheer Piepenbrink's turn. His face was a fiery red, his arms ached, and the rear portion of him was dripping.

"He must be done! He looks so—black!" They crowded about. The flames, fat and showy flames, but deceiving, illuminated their anxious faces.

"Quick, Duffels, knives and forks and the plates." Duffels groaned. They were forgotten. Oh, Juffrouw Defregge, where were your thoughts that morning?

But necessity creates the man,—Mynheer Piepenbrink's sword leaped once more out of its scabbard.

"It may not be sharp enough," he faltered.

It was rather dull, and the difficulties are obvious of carving a pig over flames that frolic in the face of the carver.

Doctor Pynappel held the umbrella while the spit was lifted to the ground.

His Honor on his knees—well, it was n't carving. In the agony of expectation no one heeded the rain that gently drenched the fire.

With admirable fortitude the Burgomaster laid the first proof of his skill on a cabbage-leaf.

They tasted solemnly and licked their fingers: the crackling was burnt, but not bad, and yet—and yet—

But it was decreed,—the unsteady flames had burnt his fair young outside to a crisp, and the heart of him—well, it was n't done by any means.

"Put him back," groaned his Honor. Put him back, indeed, with the last flicker of flame feebly licking the wet peat in the oven.

They were so discouraged that they forgot the umbrella, and the rain drizzled gently over him.

“Let us go home!” It was Jonkheer van Loo who broke the fatal silence. “Go to the canal and see if the boat has come, Duffels.”

They covered under the trees and tried to put on their boots. No Duffels, but more rain, and a mist lay over the cabbages.

They crept to the oven, and rivulets trickled into Mynheer Defregge's ears and down his back from Dr. Pynappel's umbrella. But serve him right! A man should n't go against tradition, and who ever heard of hunting in Kitwyk!

“It may cost him his position,” Mynheer van Steen whispered to Mynheer de Groot, as they reclined in a kind of steam bath on the edge of the warm bricks.

It grew darker. No Duffels, but a new horror—the wild beasts of Kitwyk were upon them. Myriads of four-footed creatures squeaked and scampered and surged towards the warm oven. The ground was covered with fat, white rabbits.

Clambering up their legs, nibbling their coat-tails—tickling their feet—

“Blexem!” groaned Mynheer Defregge and plunged forward and clutched his boots,—there was a rabbit in each one.

Panic seized them. Mynheer de Groot grasped his helmet to flee, and a fat rabbit dropped on his head. They snuggled into Dr. Pynappel's umbrella, closed in defence, and into the coat-tails of Jonkheer van Loo.

Heroism may be a crime! They fled, deserting boots and blunderbusses. They stampeded across the meadow, and stumbled over the cabbages—it is surprising how short a time it takes for a really heroic man to save himself.

The canal began and ended in mist. Not a boat was to be seen, not a sound to be heard except the snores of Duffels asleep in the shelter of an empty watering-trough.

Could Jaspar have forgotten?

Mynheer van Steen shook his head. Jaspar was nothing if not obedient. Then they remembered that because of his great obedience Jaspar had recently helped Juffrouw van Steen to elope with young Laurens de Keyser.

They would perish unless rescued. Had they been less heroic they might have been in bed. They confiscated Duffels's tub, and all sat down. A friendly bull frog began a solo; it was the only entertainment they had for four mortal hours.

But thank Heaven, their bones were not destined to bleach on the sands, not only because there was no sand but because Kitwyk came to the rescue.

That day Kitwyk had been a kind of municipal orphan. Vague were the surmises as to the destination of the heroic band. Jaspar was interrogated. The canal being in a straight line his explanation was not very much involved.

At three o'clock such of Kitwyk as were not taking an afternoon nap assembled on the canal to see Jaspar off. Excitement had risen to fever heat.

Jaspar sat in the stern smoking, the horse trundled off. They were still gazing when the trekschuit came to a sudden stop,—Jaspar had run on a mud-bank.

Kitwyk looked at him, and he looked at Kitwyk; Jaspar felt that he ought to be rescued, on the other hand Kitwyk decided that he ought to appeal for aid.

They gazed at the shipwrecked mariner for two hours until it began to drizzle hard, then they went in and said Jaspar was not a practical man. As for Jaspar, he retired into Mynheer van Steen's cabin, and being, as it were,

deserted by God and man, he brewed himself a bumper of grog and fell asleep in Mynheer's own arm chair.

It was at eight o'clock that dismay seized the souls of Kitwyk. To lose the Burgomaster, a town-council, and the doctor at one fell swoop!

In Burgomaster Defregge's house the table was set for supper. A bowl of steaming hot potatoes in their jackets graced the center, flanked on either side by a dish of fresh herrings tenderly laid side by side. Pats of butter there were too, and crusty rolls, and apple sauce, and cheese, of course. At one end stood the tea urn, but the alcohol lamp was burning unheeded, for Juffrouw Toni's anxious face was pressed against the window pane. Did not her father know that, like all divine things, a potato has its supreme moment! Along the market-place burghers of Kitwyk armed with lanterns were hurrying towards the canal. Toni's heart gave a sudden thump as she recognized the tall figure of the Dominic.

"What is the matter?" and he grasped a scurrying parishioner.

"To the rescue — to the rescue!"

"Of what?"

“The Burgomaster and Mynheer van Steen and the town-council.”

At last the Dominie understood why he had not had any supper — disaster had overtaken his worthy host.

The canal was crowded, and the Van Loo horse was being hitched to the trekschuit.

“Who will volunteer to go in search of our heroic, our lost friends?” cried the pirate, who was naturally the leader in this perilous enterprise. There was an eloquent silence,—danger had already overtaken too many of the brave citizens of Kitwyk.

The Dominie hurriedly decided that, as he could have no supper until Mynheer van Steen returned, it would be well to rescue that worthy man at once. He volunteered.

As the boat started a young person thrust a heavy box in the Dominie's hands. It was Juffrouw Defregge, and the bulky thing was a foot-stove hot with blazing charcoal. Perhaps it was intended for her father, but Heaven only knows.

They thumped along until they fell afoul of Jaspar's trekschuit. They awoke that obedient man and took him aboard as pilot. He was very melancholy and wept with dire

forebodings; he also demanded gin, but Jonkheer van Loo's canal boat was not victualled for long voyages, so the sorrowful man fell asleep.

They journeyed through a misty night, noiseless but for the creaking of the boat and the towing rope. Blurred houses and windmills sailed past, and ghostly cows on ghostly meadows.

The drizzle ceased, the clouds floated slowly away—a crescent moon peeped shyly over a church spire. Suddenly a weird, monotonous sound broke the silence.

Captain van Twist and Overste de Kock stared at the Dominie,—Jan Willem Piepenbrink rubbed his nose with a vague sense of recognition. They peered into the darkness, the trekschuit bumped up against the bank.

What is stronger than the voice of nature? Jan Willem listened as one under a spell. He rose, he spoke. “It—it ’s my uncle, I can’t be mistaken!”

He was not. It was the voice of nature. Uncle Piepenbrink was mercifully asleep, and it was he who saved their lives.

So they were found, the seven heroic men,—cowering on a tub, fast asleep. Duffels had

modestly retired to a distance with a young cabbage as pillow. No, their bones were not destined to bleach forgotten on the sands.

It was sufficient to look at them to see that they had barely escaped with their lives. Even Captain van Twist, as a retired pirate, had never seen anything more pitiable than their condition. The adventures that Kitwyk did not hear stirred them perhaps more than the most blood-curdling narrative.

It is needless to say how these heroes were received. The best that could be done was done; they were put to bed and comforted with something hot, but the very next day they nearly sneezed their heroic heads off and took an enforced vacation.

The only note of sorrow in the universal joy emanated from the youth of Kitwyk, who wondered why God had spared the school-master.

It was perhaps this rash entertainment which cast the first shadow of a doubt on Mynheer Defregge. There was about him too much of the wildly heroic. Had it not been for their daring rescue, they might have perished lamentably and become a legend, or, what is perhaps worse, a piece of poetry.

No man has a right to sacrifice fathers of families and other good citizens to his own mad zest for adventure. When the worshipful town-council so far recovered from their colds as to be able to think at all, they recognized how narrow had been their escape, and the memory of that entertainment rankled like a deep wound, and there came a time when ——

But the Burgomaster of Kitwyk would not be warned.

THE BLIGHTING OF MYNHEER VAN STEEN

IT was Juffrouw Rozenboom's cast-iron conviction that Toni Defregge had done it on purpose. Kitwyk did not wish to be censorious, but who ever heard of a sensible young person walking along the highway in black satin shoes? As for Mynheer van Steen — but it is impossible to describe the rage of that worthy man. Since the day Mettje van Steen eloped to Rotterdam with young Laurens de Keyser, he had been very lonely in his house on the Kitwyk canal. In his loneliness his eyes wandered about, and rested on the round, rosy face of Juffrouw Defregge, and this young spinster seemed worthy to fill an aching void.

Sundays, after church, Mynheer's stumpy legs invariably led him to the Burgomaster's, where, in a back-room, the sermon was discussed between sips of the best Dutch gin and puffs of long clay pipes. The gin was

good, and Mynheer had long passed that age when its being poured out by Toni Defregge could enhance its merits; but she was aware, as she filled the glasses, of two prominent boiled gooseberries that looked at her in heavy approval through a cloud of tobacco-smoke.

Juffrouw Defregge was herself possessed of an aching void. Two blights, not unconnected with the town-pump and a disappointing candidate, had settled on her. She grieved for Mynheer van Steen, and regretted that she was destined to blight his existence; and she looked at him in a way that he ought to have understood, only that Mynheer van Steen understood nothing more intangible than gin, coffee, and herrings. Indeed, with the eye of her imagination, she saw him much longer, much thinner, less given to gin and more to passion. But just as Juffrouw Toni's imagination was languishing for want of sustenance, and Kitwyk was clamoring for a new Dominic, another candidate was announced, and this time it was Mynheer van Steen's candidate.

Kitwyk was at this time in such a state of utter demoralization that it had to borrow

its ministers; and, indeed, the last little stranger in the family of the uncomplaining Duffels was still an unbaptized heathen. In this dilemma, Mynheer van Steen wrote to the theological seminary in Sippken, and demanded a candidate by return of canal-boat.

"Let him not," he explained, "be too young, or so featured as to attract the eyes of women, who are both weak and foolish. Suffice it that he is a godly man, and that he can well expound the Word."

So it was that Dominie Debray came to Kitwyk; and when Toni Defregge went to church that eventful Sabbath, she had so little confidence in the kind intentions of Divine Providence that she wore only her second-best cap.

It was afterwards discovered that the theological seminary of Sippken had mislaid Mynheer's letter, and had sent the wrong candidate to Kitwyk instead of to another place that demanded something young and progressive. Indeed, he expounded the Word in a way which made Juffrouw Defregge at the foot of the pulpit stare at him with devoted blue eyes, and drink in his eloquence as the rose the dew. The very next Sunday, for the first

time in the history of the church, the sexton had to put wooden stools in the aisles, such was the enthusiasm of the female worshipers; and Juffrouw Rozenboom, who appeared in a marvelous new cap, had a spirited altercation with a mistaken sister who had basely captured her seat in the sanctuary. Never had there been in Kitwyk such a revival of active religious interest. Female worshipers even stood on stools outside of the windows and stared in during divine service. It was very inspiring.

In vain did Mynheer van Steen, with a prophetic sense of evil, deprecate his own candidate and his own judgment—it was all ascribed to an excess of modesty. Have him Kitwyk would; and so, one summer's day, the Dominic made his triumphal entry in flapping black gown, muslin bands, and square cap, and Kitwyk was hung with garlands, and the mildewed pillars of the church were festooned with paper roses; and on one side of the market place stood the school-children, and bobbed courtesies, pulled their flaxen forelocks, and sang a shrill song of welcome under the direction of the school-master, who played the fiddle. After which

there was a banquet in the state room of William the Silent (a little musty from disuse), of which such of Kitwyk as felt inclined to pay two guilders were at liberty to partake. Mynheer van Steen did not enjoy the auspicious occasion, nor, after that, a long visit from the new Dominie while the parsonage was being refreshed with a coat of yellow paint. But Mynheer knew how to take advantage of his own enforced hospitality. As he wandered with his guest in the inspiring regions of the kitchen-garden, he sniffed the aroma of ripening vegetables, and felt so moved that he confessed his aching void and the future destiny of Juffrouw Defregge.

"It is as good as settled," he explained, by which he meant to say that he had his own consent. "But youth has confidence in youth; and as you owe me much, young man, so, in godly converse with Juffrouw Defregge—a minister has so many opportunities—speak of me," and he mopped his head with a yellow bandana, "as a grateful heart would naturally dictate."

Alas, such is the natural perversity of the human heart that young Dominic Debray,

who had hitherto overlooked the charms of Juffrouw Defregge, was suddenly seized with an ungodly interest in that young person. Of all the excellent females who flocked to hear him preach it was the usual freak of fate, that only the forbidden charms of Juffrouw Defregge should haunt his thoughts as he saw her—her sunny face flushed and her blue eyes upturned to him with a devotion most praiseworthy. There was, to be sure, an upward tilt to her nose which, in his unrighteous self communings, he was inclined to disparage; but when he considered her mouth, the two red lips touched by a wistful quiver, the sparkling eyes subdued to a proper devotion, and the sunny curls escaping from the little cap—he was inclined to be lenient, and it was, indeed, with a groan that he remembered that she was destined for his benefactor.

The parsonage stood in the shade of the chestnut trees near the old church, and it had a queer triangle of a garden meandering into the market place, from which it was separated by a linden hedge. Here, many and many a time, the Dominic paced up and down in unrighteous perplexity, to the consternation of the parsonage cat, which retired under the

hedge, her back well up, and followed the Dominie with disapproving green eyes. He was against all tradition, and his legs were abominably long, and he paced the garden in the nearest approach to agitation that the parsonage cat had ever seen. Juffrouw Rozenboom could just overlook him behind her muslin curtains.

"He is meditating on his discourse," and Juffrouw Rozenboom was much impressed. "So young and so godly! The old Dominie never meditated," which was partly true, for he had never meditated on the subject of Juffrouw Defregge, and so it was that Dominie Debray earned a most undeserved reputation for piety.

II

It was at this time that Duffels's youngest was still a little unbaptized heathen. As the tenth olive-branch Duffels tried not to look upon it with reproach; as for Mevrouw Duffels, she was convinced that it was born to greatness. Mevrouw Duffels had begun life in the establishment of Mynheer Defregge; to her had been confided the care of the Defregge geese, and it was while watching her

drive her snowy flock to pasture, armed with a willow wand, stumping along in her wooden shoes, her red cheeks glowing like two apples, and her blue skirts whipped by the wind, that Duffels was captivated. She had great executive ability: never did the giddiest goose or gander stray out of the reach of that long willow wand, which recalled the most erratic fowl to the path of virtue. It was indeed this which had helped Mevrouw Duffels to cope successfully with nine little Duffelses, but it was when the tenth arrived that she was inspired with sudden ambition.

So one day Duffels knocked apologetically at the Burgomaster's front door, the occasion being serious. Juffrouw Defregge was in the kitchen, her arms deep in flour, for she was rolling out a certain ancestral cake which had been made by Defregges from the same receipt since the days of the Spanish inquisition. The brass pots and pans on the walls, the waffle iron and the brass mortar, all reflected her, but not one did her justice, though her cap was on one side and a dab of flour ornamented her cheek. A snowy linen apron was tied under her chin, and about her floated the fragrance of rich and spicy baking from the

brass-bound stove that panted and throbbed and ran a race with the June rose clambering in at the window, to see which could smell the sweeter. Duffels's mouth watered with longing, and it was with a sigh that he recovered his senses. Would Juffrouw Defregge honor them by being godmother to the youngest? Mevrouw Duffels had discovered in him infallible signs (Duffels was privately unconvinced) that argued for future distinction.

Juffrouw Defregge, her chin on the rolling pin, gravely considered the serious responsibility of a god-child.

"We have our pride," Duffels urged, "and it being a new Dominie, it will greatly raise us in his esteem."

So Juffrouw Toni consented. However, Duffels's youngest remained a heathen, for the clamor of contending candidates left him unchristened. But salvation was at hand—Mynheer van Steen's candidate arrived, and one late autumn day Duffels again knocked at the Burgomaster's front door.

"The Dominie is coming out to us this afternoon for the christening," he announced.

A glow swept over Juffrouw Defregge's face, and her blighted existence betrayed symptoms

of reviving. It was that afternoon that she put on those little black satin shoes which aroused the resentment of Kitwyk. In those very shoes her mother had captivated the Burgomaster in the days before he had nagged her into the tomb.

Far beyond the outskirts of Kitwyk, beyond the Van Loo woods—planted by a wise and dead Van Loo—a whitewashed dwelling, with a shabby settle before the door, stood in the embrace, as it were, of four ditches, where all manner of aquatic animals lived in great harmony, and where the bullfrogs kept up a lively thrum. The lonely road through the Van Loo woods was covered with withered chestnut leaves, pine cones fell with a soft thud, and great ragged chestnut burs dropped from the branches, through which the sunlight filtered and fell in golden splashes on the heaped-up rustling leaves. The Dominic in his gown and cap, with his muslin bands under his chin, walked along the lonely path, lost in thought, and he gave a guilty start as he crossed the ditch before Duffels's house, for on the settle by the door, beginning thus early to exercise her duties, sat a young person holding in her arms the newest Duffels baby, who was

sucking his fingers and staring foolishly into vacancy.

This was the first time that the Dominic had ever been quite alone with Juffrouw Defregge, who rose at sight of him, her eyes cast down, her rosy cheek against the baby's flaxen head. She said nothing. The Dominic grasped his prayer-book, and looked past Mistress Defregge, and could think of nothing but Mynheer van Steen. So ghastly silent were they that the baby, with a prophetic sense of discomfort, began to kick his fat legs and howl most uproariously, till Mevrouw Duffels flew to the rescue, and apologized for the ungodly conduct of her offspring, struggling, as he seemed to be, against the holy church. Whereupon she bore the sinner into the house, his chin resting upon her shoulder, whence he stared at his worship and his god-mother with wet, round eyes.

But the youngest Duffels was not without a saving grace, for no sooner did the Dominic take him in his arms than he cuddled contentedly against the black gown, and stared innocently at the muslin bands till, suddenly, he made a bold grab for them; and so, with the help of a cracked blue china bowl, he was

made a Christian, and Juffrouw Defregge — her eyes big with responsibility — promised to help him renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil.

So it was over, and the Dominic put up his prayer-book, and looked uncertainly at Juffrouw Defregge. Then it was that Duffels's understanding sank forever in the estimation of his wife. "I will go home with Juffrouw Defregge," he said — and wondered why she shook her head at him, and hitched her elbow towards the unconscious Dominic, and why he was most unexpectedly sent to fetch peat. Then Mevrouw Duffels, her big hands on her big hips, and her face glowing with placid benevolence, watched the Dominic and Juffrouw Defregge cross the ditch, exciting to a few quacks the ducks that floated in the green water, while the bullfrogs twanged like a whole orchestra of bass fiddles, and Juffrouw Defregge flushed and then grew pale at the touch of the Dominic's hand. As if with one accord, they walked very far apart on the level road; and between them trotted — at least to the spiritual vision of the Dominic — a short, fat man with little choleric eyes, who explained that it was as

good as settled, and that he, Dominic De-bray, owed him a debt of gratitude. At the remembrance, the Dominic, with a frown, pulled his gown hastily about him, and proceeded to live up to his principles. As for Juffrouw Defregge, on the other side of the road, though her eyes were downcast, she could still catch a cornerwise glimpse of him; and very stately he looked,—though very grave,—and never a glance did he vouchsafe her.

If she could have her say—and she shook her head in deep meditation—she would have the long black gown fuller on his broad shoulders; nor would she be satisfied with the set of the bands—if it were only her blessed privilege to make them! At the bare thought she sighed so deeply that the silent man on the other side of the road looked at her in surprise.

“As soon would I think of a rose sighing!” he cried; and then, feeling that the remark was not serious enough, he added hastily, “What ails you, Juffrouw Defregge?” And because they were just entering the shade of the Van Loo woods he was spared the sight of Mistress Defregge’s blushes.

The sunset was filtering with golden glory through the trees, and the road, which had grown narrower, was piled high with fallen chestnut-leaves. Sometimes a lonely bird darted through the branches, and far in the distance they could hear the sleepy tinkle of a cow-bell. Truly, it seemed as if they were all alone in the world! Suddenly the Dominic stopped, bared his head, and took a long breath, as if he had a great weight on his heart; and Juffrouw Toni turned upon him her eyes sparkling with mischief.

"What ails you, Mynheer Debray?" and her heart beat very fast.

"Nothing — nothing," and the Dominic's cheek flushed. "I — I was thinking of Mynheer van Steen — a very worthy man, and a valued friend he has proved to me." His gratitude was of a most gloomy nature.

Juffrouw Defregge stared at him, and then she laughed melodiously.

"But why should the thought of Mynheer van Steen make you sigh?"

"It does not — it does not!" he replied in great haste. "A man has many reasons for sighing. Life is truly wearisome! I — I — only wish to remark that, though Myn-

heer van Steen has been younger, he is still in a great state of vigor."

"He is very fortunate," murmured Juffrouw Defregge; "but I do not —"

"He is also a man of means," the Dominie interrupted sternly.

"So I am told; but what of that?" she cried, in sad perplexity. But the Dominie was not to be interrupted.

"Youth" — and he strode angrily along, so that Toni had to skip briskly to keep pace — "youth is an unstable thing by itself. It requires the support of steadfast age. What cannot a man like Mynheer van Steen give a young wife? — not to mention his undying gratitude. Think of his undying gratitude!" he repeated, but he stared straight in front of him.

"But I don't want to think of his undying gratitude," and Toni pouted.

"No; between you there can be no such question." And the Dominie relapsed into silent gloom.

"None — none," Juffrouw Defregge nearly sobbed in disappointment; for they were nearing the end of the road. And with this she stamped her foot, and gave a sudden cry,

and would have fallen had not young Dominic Debray sprung forward and caught her in his arms; and for a moment her white face lay against his black gown, and her blue eyes were closed.

"Oh, Mynheer van Steen!" the Dominic groaned, and then Toni opened her blue eyes, and her face quivered with pain.

"My foot, oh, my foot!" she moaned, while the Dominic looked up and down the lonely road for help; but nothing was to be seen but the sunlight stealing through the trees, and a frightened hare scooting past.

"Oh, Mynheer van Steen," his soul cried within him, and he felt that the burden was more than he could bear.

"Please set me down, please!" Juffrouw Defregge sobbed, whether from pain or what, Heaven only knows. Her little mantle was all awry, and her hat was on one side as he placed her tenderly against the foot of a gnarled old chestnut-tree, and there he stood and looked helplessly down at her and at the poor foot outstretched in a little shoe of black satin.

"I think," and two tears dropped down Juffrouw Defregge's round cheeks, "it is a thorn."

Vainly the Dominic looked up and down

the road for succor. Then he spoke with an effort, "Will you let me see?"

Never was there a sterner face as he took the little black satin foot in his hand. The little black satin shoes of *Mevrouw Defregge*! Oh, the vanity of woman! Age had made them very frail, and an ancient hardened chestnut-bur had pierced the thin fabric. Sternly the *Dominic* took off the shoe, but his hands trembled. He bowed his head—the world was spinning about—so little a foot!—what had become of his honor?—*Mynheer van Steen*!

The chestnut thorns still clung to the red stocking,—he brushed them off gently,—he did not know what he did.

"It is better," *Juffrouw Defregge* faltered. With a deep sigh he looked up:

"Toni—Toni," he cried, and *Mynheer van Steen* was forgotten, "I—I love you," and he rose, hid his face in his hands and bowed his head.

"*Mynheer Debray*," Toni whispered, and like a flash she saw that she was destined to make the muslin bands.

He did not move; his attitude was one of profound dejection.

Then a miracle was wrought. Juffrouw Defregge rose to her feet. "Basil," she whispered, and clung to the old chestnut tree for support, "why should you not love me, Basil?"

He turned on her. "To ask me that! Is there not Mynheer van Steen?"

"But what concern is it of Mynheer van Steen?" she cried; and a sudden smile broke over her face, and she looked away from his eager eyes, and her bodice rose and fell with the quick beating of her heart.

"Toni!" was all he said, and he looked neither up nor down the road, but he held her in his arms.

"Basil, Basil," Juffrouw Defregge murmured, "youth is an unstable thing, but it does not need the support of steadfast age!" and because she was weak, and needed support, Basil put his arm about her, and so they walked very slowly down the sun-splashed road together, and the hare, that had scooted across the road before, lingered on the outskirts, and rubbed his whiskers in undisturbed serenity.

As for Kitwyk, it declared that no sensible maid had ever before walked through the Van



ILLUSTRATION BY J. H. WILSON

"AND SO THEY WALKED VERY SLOWLY DOWN THE SUN-
PLASHED ROAD."

Loo woods in black satin shoes. There were others, however, who were inclined to think that Juffrouw Defregge had been very sensible. Juffrouw Rozenboom even went so far as to declare that she had done it on purpose. As for the rage of Mynheer van Steen — but that cannot possibly be described.



THE BURGOMASTER'S SOFA

I

IT was Mynheer Defregge's mistake that he wished Kitwyk to join in the march of Progress, which Kitwyk declined, being satisfied with the customs of its ancestors. Indeed, the worthy man pursued Progress so constantly that his gold headed cane was forever coming down on youthful burghers with a zest out of which a bit of pendant shirt tail could not be expected to take the sting; and, indeed, there was only one thing of which that redoubtable man thought more, and that was Toni, his daughter.

Toni Defregge had been the subject of many a foreboding prophecy by reason of her worldly skirts and an ignorance of serious cooking; so, when Kitwyk heard that Juffrouw Defregge was to marry the new minister, it was simply aghast.

Perhaps Mistress Toni was a worldly young maid, but she loved her Dominie, and she

wondered why this great and good man had chosen one so unworthy as herself. She quite forgot that she had helped him as far as beseems a maid.

For three hundred years the town-council of Kitwyk had met in the same whitewashed room, around a green baize table hallowed by the scorplings of generations of clay pipes, and eight ancient oak chairs were worn smooth by three centuries of legislators. A long line of burgomasters in tarnished gilt frames looked down on their descendants from the walls, while through the diamond-shaped panes could be seen the market-place and the town-pump.

Now for three hundred years no one had questioned the beauty and propriety of this apartment. It was, therefore, like a thunder-bolt out of a clear sky when the Burgomaster demanded a renovation of the council-chamber, a coating of whitewash, a new baize for the table, and soap and water for the faces of the ancestral burgomasters. The town-council was dumb with horror; and it simply collapsed when Mynheer Defregge added, leaning on the table in the attitude in which he expected some day to be painted, that he de-

sired the appropriation of a sufficient sum for the purchase of a sofa for the exclusive use of the Burgomaster.

A sofa for the Burgomaster! In Heaven's name, what were they coming to? Jonkheer van Loo was the first to recover himself. "Blexem! does the Burgomaster propose to sleep in the council chamber?"

Now this was a delicate point, and the council coughed dubiously.

"The Burgomaster should have a sofa because of his exalted station!" Mynheer Defregge retorted.

"Never!" was all that Jonkheer van Loo could utter.

"Who is the Burgomaster of Kitwyk?"

"You are a dangerous demagogue!" and Jonkheer van Loo clapped his three cornered hat on his head, and leaped to his feet.

How to describe the consternation of Kitwyk!

A brand new sofa for the sole use of the Burgomaster! It was the wild dream of a despot who would stop at nothing. A piece of furniture of almost regal luxury to be obtained only from Rotterdam by trekschuit! If this was progress, let Kitwyk beware.

But the town-council proposed a compromise ; and, with a sense of disloyalty to their worthy predecessors, they agreed to the whitewash, baize, and soap — but the sofa they resolutely declined.

Never mind your French revolutions ; for a real upheaval of society you are referred to the chronicles of Kitwyk.

It was the Burgomaster's opinion that, if Kitwyk could only once be brought face to face with this sofa, it might gradually be reconciled. His heart was set on it ; it was the outward and visible sign of his dignity, and it was to impress the Defregge relatives at Toni's wedding. In those days he wrote many letters heavy with seals to Rotterdam — the times were serious for Kitwyk, and the post-boy complained.

II

It was a spring day. The furze along the roadside was a golden yellow, while the banks about the Kitwyk mill were red with blossoming clover.

The Burgomaster sat alone in his council-chamber, and the portraits of the ancestral

burgomasters looked down on him from their newly whitewashed walls with uneasy surprise.

A knock at the door was followed by Duffels.

"Duffels," Mynheer said solemnly, "I have sent for you because of my great confidence."

Duffels partly bowed and partly courtesied.

"To-night I expect something by trek-schuit. It will be addressed to me. Ask no questions; but convey it to the council chamber, lock it up, and bring me the key."

Duffels scratched his head. "Please, your Honor, might I ask what it is?"

"No!" thundered the great man. "It is a surprise."

That night at supper the obedient Duffels was announced; he was enveloped in a haze of perplexity.

"Is it safe?" the Burgomaster asked, in evident agitation.

"Y-yes, your Honor."

"And placed in the council-chamber?"

"Y-yes."

"Was it heavy?"

"Heavy?" Duffels repeated, and stared at his patron.

"Was it well covered?"

"Yes — oh, yes."

The Burgomaster was too greatly elated to observe Duffels's perplexity. He carried a dark-lantern, and led the way to the town-hall.

"The trouble with this age is its dead level," he said bitterly, partly because of the truth, and partly because he had hit his shins as he climbed up the narrow stairs. But it was with solemn triumph that he flung open the council-chamber and illumined the scene with his lantern.

"You may call this a sofa," and he glared at the unoffending Duffels, "but to me it is an altar—" here he paused and peered about. Then he began again. "On this sofa, as on an altar, I—thunder and lightning, where is the sofa?"

"What sofa?" Duffels repeated, vacantly.

"The sofa that came by trekschuit to-night, you imbecile!"

"Nothing came but this," and, hiding under the sacred chair of the Burgomaster, Duffels disclosed a small mongrel cur who cowered before the awful gaze of the chief magistrate of Kitwyk. He wore a little blanket, and by his side stood a rush basket.

"What does this mean?"

"He is addressed to your Honor," Duffels ventured feebly. "I—I—thought there must be some mistake,—but you would n't let me explain."

How to describe the rage of that great man! "Get out of here!" he cried, in just resentment, to the little dog, who, overcome by the majesty of the reigning head of Kitwyk, with its bit of a tail between its legs and its blanket all awry, hopped down stairs and disappeared in the darkness.

Every night at ten o'clock there shuffled out of the porch of William the Silent, carrying a dim lantern, a shabby old man, who picked his way absently over the cobblestones. This night it was so dark that the pump loomed up like a ghost, and he might have run against it but for a dismal wail at its foot, and lowering his lantern, he found it was emitted by a very small dog in a voluminous cloak which was entangled in an iron ornament.

"Poor beast," said the schoolmaster, and released him. The little dog crept close to his rescuer and gazed at him with such melancholy eyes that the old man was touched. He walked on a few steps and

then he looked back ; the dog still sat there watching him.

“ So you, too, are friendless,” said the schoolmaster, and patted him on his blunt head, and the result was that he took the little dog home.

No one ever claimed him, and no one ever noticed him but the schoolmaster's sister, Juffrouw Rozenboom, who lived in the two rooms on one side of the entry while her brother lived in the other two, and they were not merely divided by a chilly stone-paved entry, which that excellent lady rejoiced to drench with soap and water at unexpected seasons, but because of her righteous contempt for his patience and lack of enterprise.

When the old sexton, Rozenboom, died, he willed to his daughter, along with his violoncello, an ancient sofa, the one article of luxury in the family. This piece of furniture Juffrouw Rozenboom immediately bore to her best room, a sacred apartment where few penetrated, and nothing was left to the schoolmaster but three hard and shiny horse-hair stools. Reminiscences of this sofa floated before him in day-dreams, when he saw it back in its forsaken corner and he himself

reclining in its hollow, mellowed to the human form by generations of Rozenbooms, smoking his long porcelain pipe. Had he not once dreamed in its corner? She was dead, the girl he had loved, and he was a lonely old man,—he did not pine for the long-lost happiness, but only for the sofa.

III

It was of course when he did not expect it that the Burgomaster's sofa came. Its muffled form was borne to the town-hall in silence. It was a long, gaunt, horsehair structure studded with brass nails. The town-council was just in session when there was heard a turbulent scuffling up the narrow stairs. The Burgomaster turned ghastly pale, as did such of his council as were awake—they remembered the French Revolution and other popular uprisings. The door burst open, and in staggered four men with a muffled load. An oil-cloth being in baggy breeches and a huge sou'wester addressed no one in particular in a hoarse voice that lay in ambush behind a beard like a yellow whisk-broom. He was the skipper of *The Thirsty*

One, the canal boat plying between Rotterdam and Kitwyk.

"Here it is at last, your Honor, and here is the bill," and the old sea-dog rolled forward and pulled his forelock.

There was a dead silence. The Burgomaster was embarrassed; he blew his nose and coughed. It was Jonkheer van Loo who spoke.

"What — what — what is it?"

"The Burgomaster's sofa."

"The sofa for the council-chamber," Mynheer Defregge explained.

"Never!" shouted Jonkheer van Loo, while the town-council breathed hard, which was all that could be reasonably expected of them, but they gazed at Jonkheer van Loo as if their only hope was in him.

"You are a demagogue!" cried that patriotic man. "It is such as you who begin with sofas and end with thrones! But we are equal,—no one shall sit upon a sofa above his fellow man."

There was an approving murmur.

"Blexem! here it shall stay," and the Burgomaster beat the new baize cover with his fist.

"We refuse an appropriation," the town-council cried as one man.

Of what avail that Mynheer Defregge was a man of iron? His council was unmoved by the horseshair glory, or the brass nails, and they declared a hundred and fifty guilders for a sofa to be high treason, and refused to pay the bill. The Burgomaster retired in outraged dignity, and the merchant in Rotterdam clamored for his pay by canal-boat; feeling in Kitwyk ran to fever-heat—the outcome was uncertain—just as the time approached for the wedding of Juffrouw Defregge.

The parsonage was ready. A fragrant grapevine blossomed over the porch, and a June rose twined around the windows, and the buff bricks glowed in the early summer sun. The parsonage cat washed its face until it was a wonder that it had any left, for Juffrouw Defregge was to marry her Dominic.

There had been other weddings in Kitwyk before, but this one Mynheer Defregge proposed should mark an era, for in the march of Progress he had learned a great deal. An ancient glass coach was resurrected out of the hay loft of William the Silent, its windows

were washed, its tarnished gildings were burnished, and the cushions, in which the festive moths had made havoc, were beaten and patched. Two horses, which in private life tilled the soil, were for a couple of weeks fed on the fat of the land. Kitwyk watched these preparations with bated breath.

All the Defregges from far and near were invited, except an old aunt in Sippken who had money, but for whom Mynheer Defregge would have been obliged to blush. She was an eccentric lady with a great distillery and a fortune in pigs. She was also frightfully democratic, and it was rumored that she approved of the French Revolution. She was a mighty lean old woman, with a beak of a nose, a black front, and a huge black cap; she wore, besides, men's boots and blue stockings, and took snuff.

The day before the wedding Kitwyk was shaken to its center. Kobus, the town trumpeter, armed with a hand-bell, perambulated the streets and announced that a carriage would in turn be sent to all the guests bidden to the wedding banquet of Juffrouw Defregge. This was indeed a sign of Progress, for Kitwyk had hitherto attended all such state occa-

sions on its legs. It was further requested—at least such was the rumor—that no one would betray ill breeding by coming on foot.

Mynheer Defregge had debated a long time if at the civil marriage, at which as chief magistrate he was to preside, he should be discovered in the council-chamber seated in all his glory on the sofa in that attitude which had been his dream, or if the guests were to assemble and he were then to sink majestically in that sacred corner. He finally decided to appear just before the bride and groom, and he gave very particular directions to Kobus to guard the sofa to prevent any sacrilegious person from usurping his place. So, half an hour before the ceremony, Kobus unlocked the town-hall and patrolled the length of that noble piece of furniture, while the old burgomasters on the walls looked very uneasy.

At last the Defregge clans were assembled and the Burgomaster appeared. His dream was realized,—never was there anything so majestic as his step, or so red as his face; and the buckles of his shoes, and the buttons of his coat shone resplendent. He looked about with royal condescension and singled out the richest and worthiest Defregge whom to honor.

This was a little dried-up magnate from Java with a bad liver, who was being made much of by all the Defregges, and whose visit had been full of pleasant surprises. The assembled Defregges were much impressed by the courtesy of those great men, neither of whom would sit down before the other, so at last they sat down simultaneously on the Burgomaster's sofa,—or, rather, they did not sit down, they simply disappeared from the face of the earth, and for a moment the assembled Defregges were paralyzed, but at the sound of heart-rending cries they flew to the rescue.

Kitwyk harbored a traitor!

The seat of that fatal sofa had been unscrewed; it had given way, and the two distinguished martyrs had sunk into a horse-hair abyss, and both, what with rage and standing on their heads for a couple of minutes, were in imminent danger of apoplexy.

When they at last emerged the magnate from Java's coat was split up the back, and his liver was frightfully upset, and as for his dignity—but, oh heavens! what could heal his dignity. As for the Burgomaster, he had just time enough to fling himself in the familiar chair in which three centuries of burgo-

masters had reposed, when Juffrouw Toni appeared, all in white, her face a little pale, and the sparkle in her eyes subdued as she clung to the arm of her Dominic. Both were profoundly oblivious to the agitation in the air, such is the selfishness of love, and Juffrouw Defregge plighted her troth cheerfully indifferent to the gloom of her excellent father, only filled with a passionate wonder why she should be so happy. Probably she had not deserved it, for she was but a worldly young thing; but perhaps he was not quite so good, nor so great, nor so perfect as she thought, but she never found it out.

Juffrouw Defregge had vanished, and it was young Mevrouw Debray who fled to her little room for a last glimpse of herself in an old tarnished mirror with a true lover's knot on top. She looked at her white image with serious blue eyes.

"Mevrouw Debray, you are a Dominic's wife now," she said, and folded her hands, and her eyes became dim with happy tears. "God bless my dear Dominic," she murmured to herself.

In the Defregge kitchen the wedding banquet was approaching a delicious perfection

The tables were set through the hall and the living rooms, and they glittered with silver and crystal. The Burgomaster stalked up and down in nervous agitation, and he pulled his great watch out of his pocket so often that it was warm with friction. The day had not been all he had dreamed, and the magnate from Java had gone to bed to nurse his liver. But the glass coach was ready, he himself had seen it attached to the two steeds of William the Silent, and it only remained for Duffels to fetch the guests. He pulled out his silver turnip again. It was high time for the first instalment. Where were Toni and the Dominie? He roared upstairs for them, his face was scarlet with worry. They hurried down and looked about in surprise; nobody was there but the Burgomaster, and he was grasping his head.

"Father, what has happened?" and Toni ran to him. Just then there came a knock at the door, and with a sigh of relief he tore it open and fell back, for, instead of the chariot of William the Silent and four precious guests, there came in a lean old woman in a snuff-colored cloak and armed with a great cotton umbrella.

"Don't you know me?" she cried.

Mynheer glared speechlessly at her while she pulled out a horn box from a pocket under her skirts and took a pinch of snuff. "And where is Robespierre?"

Mynheer Defregge stamped up and down with both his feet.

"Robespierre, my good woman,"—the Dominic interposed.

"Young man, don't interfere. Where 's my dog Robespierre? I sent him to you by canal boat, nephew."

But the Burgomaster was beyond control; he had dashed into the market place and came back wringing his hands. The glass coach was still placidly standing in the yard of William the Silent.

Where was the traitor, Duffels!

"He 's forgotten them," he sobbed.

"Forgotten what?" the unrepresentable old woman asked, cracking a handful of almonds that she had taken from a dish.

"The guests!"

"Never mind, I 'm here," and she took off her dusty cloak and frilled cap and looked more unrepresentable than ever, whereupon she dropped into the chair opposite the bride

and groom—the very chair that had been reserved for the magnate from Java, and put her sharp elbows on the satin damask.

“To-morrow I shall hunt up Robespierre. He wore a blanket, and his dinner was in a rush basket. I send him to do my visiting, and I judge of folks just as they treat him,” and she bent her beetling eyebrows on the agitated back of the Burgomaster. “And now, for Heaven’s sake, hurry up the dinner, for I’m famished!” and indeed she had eaten up all the loose confections and fruit within reach.

Just then there was a mysterious shuffling at the front door. It flew open, and before them stood the unfortunate Duffels, steadied behind by two Samaritans, one of whom, it is painful to confess, was Mynheer van Steen’s Jasper; and Duffels smiled on Mynheer Deggel with foolish, lackluster eyes, and it did not require a prophet to discover that Duffels was abominably drunk.

“Take him home!” the Burgomaster groaned, and Duffels, with a singular inability to discover whether to walk on his head or his heels, was borne away.

Then it was that messengers were sent in hot haste for the guests, and though some,

with a sense of injury, had already gone to bed, none of them could be accused of ill-breeding. *Mevrouw van Loo* arrived in black velvet and bird-of-paradise, full of meek thankfulness that the glory had departed from the occasion. The dinner was overdone, the hot drinks were cold, and the cold drinks were warm, but she never murmured. A frightful old woman with a hook nose and a shocking bad dress sat in the place of honor opposite the bride and groom, and, if possible, put a last blight on the occasion. The fact was that the only ones who profited by these tremendous preparations and *Mynheer Defregge's* mania for progress, were the worthy steeds of *William the Silent*, who for two weeks had eaten their heads off. As for the glass coach, it again retired to the hay-loft, where it gathered a new supply of dust and cobwebs in preparation for another great occasion.

IV

THE next morning *Kitwyk* was thrilled by the monotonous ringing of a hand bell, varied by a nasal chant: "Lost, a little fat black-and-white dog with a stumpy tail. Answers

to the name of Robespierre, and wears a blanket."

Beside Kobus, the town-crier, stalked Aunt Defregge, her cow-hide boots crunching the cobblestones, while with her umbrella she poked into all the doorways and under the hedges, as if she rather suspected the vanished Robespierre must be lurking somewhere about. As they reached the house of Juffrouw Rozenboom, the muslin curtain of her one window was violently agitated, and she was discovered making strange signals.

"What," Aunt Defregge asked in great disgust, "does that absurd old thing want?" for she had no patience with feminine weakness, and she could see with half an eye that Juffrouw Rozenboom wore leather gloves, and that there was a droop about her, as of a superannuated water-lily, which enraged the old woman. The door was opened, and they were mysteriously ushered into the back room, which was at once kitchen and bedroom, the bed serving as dining-table, and being still decorated with the remains of a frugal breakfast. Juffrouw Rozenboom laid her finger on her lips.

"There is in this house," she whispered, "a little black-and-white dog with a stumpy tail and a blanket, and he came six weeks ago."

Oh, Juffrouw Rozenboom!

The truth was, she could n't abide dogs, and if Robespierre had only been gifted with speech, he could have told how often he had been greeted by a pailful of soapsuds, dashed over him, at unexpected encounters, by that prejudiced lady.

"He lives with my brother across the entry," she concluded, and courtesied them out, and smiled as sourly as beseems a lady with poetical aspirations.

Kobus thumped at the schoolmaster's door, and Aunt Defregge loomed up behind; and of the two culprits within, one looked wistfully at Kobus as at the personification of righteous law, and the other culprit recognized the hook nose, and the familiar umbrella that pounded so masterfully on the bare floor, until Robespierre, his little stumpy tail trailing, crept out from between the schoolmaster's legs and stood confessed in all his base ingratitude.

"You recognize him?" Kobus asked.

"I do," and Aunt Defregge snapped her

snuff-box with a loud report. Kobus departed, and Robespierre sank on his fat haunches and bowed his head.

The schoolmaster looked uncertainly at his visitor, who had plumped down on a horse-hair stool and was staring at him.

"If it had not been for that singular female across the way, I should never have found him," she said.

The schoolmaster bowed his head over a pile of dog-eared copy-books.

"Hum! so you did n't mean to give him back?"

He was still silent.

"When did you find him?"

"One night—he was lost and starving—I brought him home."

Aunt Defregge pulled up her petticoats, displayed her boots, and took a pinch of snuff.

"I am a lonely old man,"—the schoolmaster was crushed by a sense of his great iniquity,—
"and never before have had some one at home glad to see me; and so—I could n't give him up. It was wicked," he confessed; "but his bark is just like talking"; and at this complimentary description of his merits

Robespierre crept back to the schoolmaster, and they both looked wistfully at their judge.

It was such a poor, shabby little room, with whitewash on the window instead of curtains, and the place where the ancestral sofa once stood dolefully bare, except for the black marks where the Rozenboom ancestors had leaned their heads against the wall.

"Lord! have n't you anything better to sit on than that?" and Aunt Defregge bounced from the horsehair stool.

Once there had been a sofa, the schoolmaster explained, with a sigh; but now it belonged to his sister.

"Have you no arm-chair?"

"No; only when I dream,—a luxurious dream," he answered, smiling.

"Look here," Aunt Defregge said solemnly; "whoever found my dog was to have a reward. You shall have an arm chair."

"Thank you, but I don't want a reward."

Such magnanimity she could not grasp.

"But just think of a great, warm easy-chair on which you can sit by the window and smoke and sleep. How happy you would be!" and she laid her head on one side, like an insinuating old bird.

"I will take nothing for befriending one I love," he said, a little impatiently.

"Well, if you won't, you won't," Aunt Defregge retorted; "but now I'll take my dog"; and, with a businesslike swoop, she had the reluctant Robespierre under her arm; and so Juffrouw Rozenboom, watching behind her muslin curtains, had the joy of seeing them depart.

For a moment she stood in the market-place before the town-pump, lost in thought; then she was aroused by the struggles of Robespierre and the clatter of wooden shoes: a miscellaneous throng was hurrying toward the town-hall. There was the magnate from Java, who had got the better of his liver, supported by other noble Defregges. Aunt Defregge gave the reluctant Robespierre a quieting thump, and followed the crowd.

A staring placard was nailed to the door of the town-hall.

Auction Sale, this Day, for Debt:

A SOFA

Mistakenly called the Burgomaster's.

"Ho!" and Aunt Defregge grinned; and, lifting her petticoat so as to give free action to her feet, she climbed up to the council-chamber.

It was a scene of wild excitement. Mynheer van Steen, his face purple with emotion, stood on a table and harangued the multitude.

"Down with the demagogue!"

Just then heavy footsteps echoed on the stairs. And the Burgomaster burst into the room.

Mynheer van Steen thumped the wall with his mallet.

"Who makes a bid for this sofa?"

Then the Burgomaster found words; he made the only bid. Mynheer van Steen trembled with rage. The Burgomaster looked insolently about. Mynheer van Steen in a passion was about to knock the hammer for the third time, when a shrill voice piped up out of a distant corner:

"I'll teach you to turn my dog out of doors!"

"It's only my old fool of an aunt," roared the Burgomaster. "She's mad!"

"I'm not mad, nephew," she retorted shrilly; "but I'm rich!"

And, to the rapture of the crowd, they bid against each other; and the Burgomaster lost his head, and Aunt Defregge took snuff, taunted him, and bid briskly higher.

"Two hundred guilders," shrieked Mynheer van Steen, and pounded against the wall. "Who bids more?"

No one. As for the Burgomaster, he stampeded down-stairs, and realized that he could never be again what he had been. And so Aunt Defregge, much to her own surprise, found herself in possession of the Burgomaster's sofa.

"Where shall it be taken to?" Mynheer van Steen asked, and he bowed to the ground. Aunt Defregge, with Robespierre in her arms, stared at him vacantly for a moment; for she was bewildered by the excitement, and there was a flush on her yellow cheek-bones.

"Taken to?" she repeated, and Robespierre began to whine and struggle. She gave him another thump, and stood so long considering that Mynheer van Steen did have serious doubts as to her sanity; but presently she spoke up.

"Take it to the schoolmaster's house; and see here,"—and she thrust the reluctant Robespierre into Mynheer van Steen's arms,—“he's to go with it. Say they 're from the old woman; he 'll know.”

So, after all, Juffrouw Rozenboom was des-

tinued to hear Robespierre bark for many a long day, and the vacant place in the school-master's room was filled by a sofa so comfortable and so gorgeous that it seemed more than ever like a dream. As for Mynheer Defregge, he not only lost the Burgomaster's sofa, but, because misfortunes never come singly, Kitwyk, being terribly tired of the march of Progress, the very next time declined to re-elect him to his exalted station. There was a tumultuous meeting of the town-council, the result of which was that Nicholas de Groot, who had pined for the honor for forty-five years, found himself at the height of his ambition, and Kitwyk breathed freely once again. Mynheer de Groot abhorred innovations; he even complained of canal boats as a too lively means of locomotion. He did what was supremely wise; he slept during all political crises, and he is remembered to this day as one of the ablest of the burgomasters of Kitwyk.

JOSSELIN

I

THE Kitwyk windmill overlooked the canal, with its boats and barges laden with grain moored to the banks, waiting to be unloaded by the great, creaking pulleys. The mill was a gray old shaft surrounded midway by a balcony reached by a flight of stone steps, each of which had in its day served as mill-stone. When the balcony door was opened there streamed out the aroma of freshly ground grain; even the miller's eye-lashes were powdered with flour, and there was a haze of it on her red cheeks: for the miller of Kitwyk was a young maid.

Many a skipper, waiting for his grain to be ground, had wafted vain sighs to the miller standing in the doorway, her dark-blue skirts pinned about her hips, her sleeves rolled up, and a white handkerchief tied in a knot at her breast, while on each temple, under her muslin

cap, stood a bold gold corkscrew, the rock on which many a Dutch idyl has wrecked.

The Van Gelderns had been millers of Kitwyk for three hundred years, and mighty proud they were of their descent; and there never was a hitch in the lineage until, contrary to all tradition, the last heir to the mill proved to be twins.

It was the girl who adored the mill, with its dim, winding stairs lost in the great black cap turning softly in its groove so that the wings could catch each breath of the shifting wind.

Maarten, the boy, was slight and dark and dreamy, with wild longings that even strayed beyond where the North Sea beats against the sand dunes; and he hated the old weather-beaten mill, the level fields fading into the hazy distance, and the silence broken only by the tinkling cow bells.

Kitwyk disapproved of romance, and if it tolerated that fatal quality in young Duymar van Twist, it was because, as the direct descendant of a pirate in the reign of Philip the Second, he was the victim of heredity. However, the last Van Twist was nothing more bloodthirsty than third mate on the *Esper-*

ance de Jong, a merchantman plying between Rotterdam and the Dutch colonies in Java. Twice a year he came back to demoralize the placid youth of Kitwyk, and to see his old parents. But once when he came back the two chairs by the hearth were empty, and he sat alone in his familiar place, his head in his hands. When he went he closed the green blinds, and stood for the last time by his mother's chair, and laid his cheek on the faded chintz cushion against which her frail face had rested; then he locked the door behind him. There was a spider waiting to weave its web across the rusty lock, and it remained undisturbed for many a long year; for now, when he returned to Kitwyk, it was William the Silent who creaked him a dismal welcome.

Kitwyk listened to his marvelous adventures with forbearance until one day he capped the climax to his riotous imagination: he had seen mountains, he said, higher than the Kitwyk church steeple. After that he was avoided: the lie was too barefaced.

However, the stray arrow shot home.

"Josselin, now I know! I mean to be a sailor like Duymar van Twist."

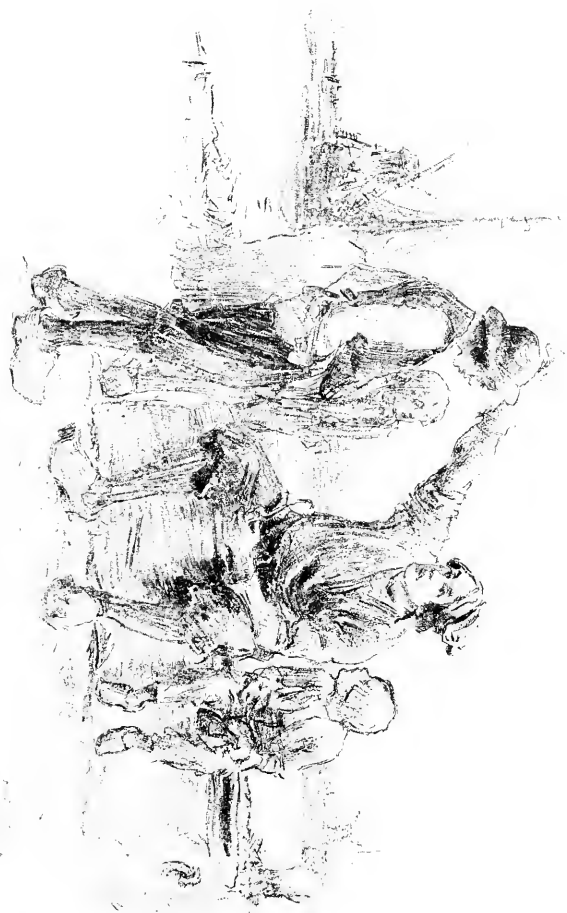
"You will break father's heart, Maarten."

The miller's room, low and smoke-stained, overlooked the canal, and here three centuries of millers had kept their accounts, and watched the coming and going of the boats. The last miller of Kitwyk was a proud and silent man, and Sundays, when he paced up and down before the mill, his gold-headed cane behind his back and his chin well up, he was a very honorable and a very appalling sight. One day the miller's fist came crashing down on the table, and Maarten, the heir, crept out of his presence, his face as white as the best flour ground in the mill.

"Wait till you see me sail a man-of-war up the Zuyder Zee!" he cried to Josselin; but his voice shook.

So the heir rebelled, and one day he disappeared, and his father never uttered his name again; but in a week he became an old man. For ten years they never heard; then a letter came to Josselin. Not a word of sailing a man-of-war up the Zuyder Zee, only that he was second mate on a merchantman, the *Memory of Kragaroc*, bound to Bombay from Rotterdam, and that he had a wife—a little, young thing—and a baby, a sturdy chap as like his grandfather the miller as two peas.

"TWICE A YEAR HE CAME BACK."



But when Josselin wrote, and implored him to bring wife and child to the mill, he never answered. So the miller of Kitwyk was, after all, a girl; for her father's working-days were over before his time, and she had no leisure for romancing, she declared.

Still, her romance came all the same, and sauntered persistently past the mill toward sunset; and one day she found herself looking very intently into a tarnished mirror.

"Josselin, Josselin," she said reproachfully, "I fear this is love"; and so it was.

And, as if Duymar van Twist, whose riotous imagination had led poor Maarten astray, had not done them harm enough, he must lay siege to the miller of Kitwyk, and inconsiderately obtrude his dark face into the serious reckonings of the mill, until the miller, who never before had wasted an hour, began to linger on the balcony at sunset, watching the twilight fields, and dreaming. And all Kitwyk but the old miller knew of Josselin's romance; and the first time Josselin wrote a love-letter, and sent it to Rotterdam by trek-schuit, such imagination as Kitwyk possessed was stirred to its depths. It was rumored that she wrote as many as one letter a week,

and Kitwyk realized the mighty power of love when it reckoned up the postage. So slow was the progress of Josselin's love-story that one day, as they strolled along the foot-path through the wheat-field, Duymar broke the silence with a question — "How long has my patience lasted, Josselin?"

"Five years, Duymar. But when Maarten returns —"

"But, my God, if he never returns? Have I not been patient? Give me the rest of your life, my Josselin."

There was not a soul in sight; the ripening grain swayed softly about them; a cricket chirped. He put his hands on her strong young shoulders, and looked deep into her eyes.

"You know, Josselin, that I am not always a patient man."

"And what will you do?" she cried in sudden defiance.

"I shall go away and never come back."

She stooped, and picked a blood-red poppy in the yellow wheat, and tore the delicate petals.

"Then go and never come back," and she turned away.

"Josselin, Josselin, for God's sake, listen! I did not mean it!"

She could not speak, for her voice trembled, and she did not look at him, or he would have seen the tears in her eyes. So he walked beside her in moody silence, and doubted her love.

II

WHEN Duymar again returned to Kitwyk, it was on a winter night. He had a message from the sea. He climbed the mill steps and paused an instant, his hand on the brass knocker. The full moon shone across the fields, and turned to silver fretwork the frost on the stunted willows along the canal. The lights from the scattered houses fell with a red glow across the moonlight; the shadows lay keen and clear-cut on the white roads. The mill door opened.

"Duymar, Duymar, you have come back to me again!"

For a moment Josselin forgot her strength and pride, and clung to him, sobbing, her head on his breast. Suddenly she looked up.

"What has happened?"

"Child, child, I have bad news."

She tore herself from him: he was the messenger of death.

"The *Memory* lost — lost with all on board!" She repeated the words like one dazed, until she saw by his face that some one else had heard.

In the doorway stood the old miller, and for the first time in years he uttered his son's name.

"Maarten, my son?"

"Lost!" There was silence; then the old man laughed, stretched out his hands, and fell senseless to the ground.

KITWYK lay under ice and snow. The canals cut like black ribbons across the meadows and marshes. In Josselin's room, in a cradle in which generations of millers had been rocked, a sturdy little chap lay sleeping peacefully. The little young thing, Maarten's widow, was dead of a broken heart, and one night Josselin had returned from Rotterdam to the mill with her only legacy asleep on her breast.

The wind moaned about the gray tower, and beat against two lonely figures struggling along the highway. Night after night

the old miller plodded along in a vain search for the *Memory*, which would never again sail into an earthly harbor. Sometimes he would stop and stare piteously into the darkness, where the frozen canal lay between dead reeds and rushes, and cry that there was no ship in sight, until Josselin, with her arms about him, could coax him home. The last time they found a seafaring man pacing up and down before the mill steps.

"You promised not to come, Duymar!"

"How can I sleep, with you wandering over the country night after night! Josselin, is there to be no end to this?"

The last miller of Kitwyk hobbled up the steps, and the girl clung to his unresponsive old hand as if it could help her.

"Am I to be sacrificed forever, Josselin?"

For a moment they looked at each other in silence; then the anger and impatience in his upturned face gave her strength.

"No."

"Josselin!"

"Duymar, I will not bring into your life the burden of a sick old man and a helpless child who have no one in all the world but me." There was no sound but the rise and

fall of the wind. The old miller was staring into vacancy.

"I give you back your word, Duymar." The wind creaked the still wings of the mill; a bat flew heavily past.

"Let it be, Josselin. What is of no value is easily returned. Good night — good by."

Tim next morning the miller went to work with a white, worn face, and her blue eyes were very dim. A tow-headed urchin clattered toward the mill, carrying a package clumsily wrapped in a piece of sail cloth. It must be a peace-offering, Josselin thought, and smiled as she cut the edges coarsely sewn together. Then her hands sank at her sides, and she stared before her: in her lap lay a heap of letters, and the writing was her own. He had taken her at her word, and sent back the old love-letters into which she had poured her heart and soul. She sprang to her feet, and they fell to the ground.

"I will go to him; he must forgive me!" But as she reached the door a baby's fretful wail stopped her. Josselin paused. "I had forgotten! What have I to do with love? God help me!"

She went back, and picked up the letters one by one.

“He will never know how much I loved him!”

As for Duymar van Twist, he was on his way to Rotterdam, where the *Esperance de Jong* lay at anchor beside the Boompjes.

He kept his promise, for he never returned,—at least not for thirty-five years, which is never,—and when he did, the tow-headed urchin who had carried back his old love-letters to Josselin was burgomaster—Burgomaster Defregge, and a very mighty man; while the mill baby, Maarten’s son, had in turn become miller of Kitwyk. He was also a worthy married man, and the parent of twins who, at the age of seven, were old in the ways of mischief.

The twins had no reverence for any one, but they had a mighty opinion of Great-aunt Josselin. Once, in school, the Dominie turned his spectacles upon them, and propounded an awful theological question:

“Who created heaven and earth?”

As if they did n’t know!

It was a serious moment, but the twins

were strong in the consciousness of knowledge.

"If you please, sir," they piped as one man, "Great-aunt Josselin."

III

THERE was once a man who was a nine days' wonder, but he was an exception. There came to an old house in Kitwyk, which had been closed for more than a generation, an ancient man who limped and whose clothes were shabby. No one welcomed him but a company of beetles that scurried across the deserted hearth, and the spiders that lived over the key hole. There was a damp and musty smell when the door was opened, and the sunshine fell across the heavy air.

A tumble-down bench stood in front of the house, under a cherry-tree. He lighted his pipe and sat down, his elbow on his knee. Across the fields, where the grain swayed gently, he could see the old windmill, and nothing had changed but the years and he. On the *Esperance de Jong* there had been no time for regrets. It was indeed whispered that the last Van Twist had been true to tra-



" THERE CAME TO AN OLD HOUSE."

dition, and that he had sailed the high seas as a very successful pirate. At all events, he was the only hero of Kitwyk, and it was a great blow for the placid youth of the town to discover their hero in a shabby old man who scraped carrots before the residence of the Van Twists; they were reconciled only when they saw the wonderful toys he could make. One day the twins brought to Great-aunt Josselin a basket carved out of a cherry-stone, with two tiny spoons inside. There was a startled look in her eyes as the toy lay in her broad palm, and when she was alone at last, she took out of her chest of drawers a bit of silver paper, and in her hand lay another cherry-basket, and the only difference between the two was thirty-five years.

The pirate hardly ever emerged out of his garden-patch, for he was poor and shy and bitter; so one day the Dominie knocked at his door, to lure the unregenerate one to church. Whereupon he discovered that the only thing the matter with the pirate's theology was his coat, which was painfully shabby. The Dominie went in search of his mainstay in all trouble, Great-aunt Josselin. She dropped her knitting as he told his story,

and looked away from him across the hazy fields.

"So poor!" and her eyes grew so dim that she had to wipe them on her big linen handkerchief. "You see," she explained,—for the Dominic stared hard,—“he was once a—a—friend of mine.”

As a result of this interview, the pirate of Kitwyk was requested by the Dominic to give private geography lessons, at a penny a head, to such infants whose parents felt this sum to be well invested, and Aunt Josselin at once immolated her own grand-nephews. These unwilling victims were led to the sacrifice three times a week by the miller's boy; for they had a great aversion to knowledge. The amazing artfulness with which Aunt Josselin questioned them on their return! Did they love their teacher? "No!" they roared, until they found that this was the wrong answer.

"So he drinks a cup of coffee at four o'clock. Is it good?" They smacked their lips, for in a temporary absence of the pirate they had tasted.

"How does he look in his new brown coat? Handsome and stately?"

"No!" whereupon Aunt Josselin locked up the red-japanned cake-caddy.

For fear of meeting him, she never ventured over the threshold of the mill, as if the thirty-five years were only a dream; but the old tenderness had to find an outlet, and the twins were the unwilling channels of anonymous gifts. The pirate never inquired the name of the donor, but his unerring instinct told him when a jug of cream had diminished on the road, just as he discovered, with a prophetic eye, that a string of twelve sausages had in its transit been reduced to eleven.

"Who ever heard of eleven sausages!" and the twins quailed under his spectacles, whereupon he bent on them his long, thin nose. They burst into a paroxysm of coughing — the fatal secret was out — they smelled of garlic.

"I am deeply grieved," said the pirate; and he thrashed them.

So the twins suffered because of that old romance of Great-aunt Josselin's.

One late autumn day their sufferings reached a climax — the pirate announced his approaching birthday.

Now, when Aunt Josselin heard it was the pirate's birthday, she invaded the mill kitchen for the first time for years, and, with a flush on her handsome old face, she mixed a cake which for bulk and richness caused the cook to clasp her hands in ecstasy. When it emerged from the oven it was a circular, nutty structure, rich with raisins and citron, on the expansive, deep-brown bosom of which was inscribed, in fat letters of white sugar, "To Our Faithful Teacher."

How Aunt Josselin had pondered over that dedication, and lingered blushing over each letter! She had even a vague hope that the pirate might suspect. Whereupon she wrapped it in a sheet of white paper, which she had saved for a great occasion, and tied it with a white ribbon, a relic of her girlhood. Then the precious burden was confided to the unwilling care of the twins, and she watched them until they were out of sight.

It was a chilly afternoon, and there was enough heat left in the cake to strike through the paper, along with a heavenly smell that made them both sniff with longing. They crunched the fallen leaves with their wooden shoes; the innocent cake be-

came a veritable instrument of torture. They had just reached a musty outhouse,—the temporary shelter of stray fowls and pigs,—when, as if moved by one impulse, they sat down on the deserted door-step, with the cake on their knees. The rich perfume was so penetrating that they rubbed their noses several times up and down the paper, which, if agreeable and warming, was unsatisfactory. There was a neat white bow on top, on which Aunt Josselin had expended a world of thought. To give a tug at this bow, leaving the imprint of a grimy forefinger, was the work of one reckless second, and before they realized the enormity of the crime the paper flew open, and before their enchanted vision lay the cake. It was with great difficulty, which necessitated the outlining of the fat letters with their black forefingers, that they spelled out the inscription.

More than indignant, they were hurt. That a constant birching of their own tender persons should result in such a reward was not what they had expected from Great-aunt Josselin. Their eyes and fingers went on a vain tour of discovery over the cake to see if any culinary accident had resulted in a kind of

wart which could be removed without suspicion. Their disappointed eyes reconnoitered the inscription. How much sugar had been wasted on those fat letters, "To Our Faithful Teacher"!

"To," they finally decided, was quite unnecessary, and if they were to pick it off no one would be any the wiser. So "To" disappeared, and the twins licked their chops and meditated. The result was that "Faithful Teacher" was decided to be fully as convincing as "Our Faithful Teacher." "Our" disappeared. They contemplated the vacant space, and sucked their fingers, and agreed that "Faithful" was superfluous; for if "Teacher" was left, the "Faithful" could be readily understood; besides, the pirate did n't deserve it. So they picked off the "Faithful"; but when they stood face to face with the lonely "Teacher," it looked so lopsided and forlorn, on one side of the cake, that a terrible fear seized them. It might be better to eat off the "Teacher," and to consider the cake as a rich but unornamented dish. And this they did, but with misgivings.

In the mean time the white paper had been scuffled about under their feet. They picked

it up, and wrapped it about the cake as well as they could, and tied the dirty ribbon in a hard knot. Then they hoped for the best, what with the day's growing dim, the pirate's eyesight failing, and the joyful emotions presumably active in his bosom because of the day.

The pirate had made mighty preparations as they crept meekly in. A smell of coffee issued from the bedroom, the door of which was garlanded with evergreen, as if the pirate, whose work it was, was very glad that he had been born. In the other room a table was prepared for gifts, to which the twins added the cake, but placed it modestly in the background. Then the pirate appeared, looking so smiling and benevolent that they were filled with remorse, which was further increased as he generously helped the eight geographical sufferers to the most delicious coffee and cream, slabs of raisin-bread, and apple-jam, thick and gold-brown.

The twins basked in his smiles; the evil day seemed far off. "Now," the pirate said at last—"now I will see what your honored parents have so unexpectedly bestowed on me. It is not so much the gift as the spirit."

The twins were in turn summoned out of a dark corner, where they had taken refuge under the pirate's clarinet, when the fatal cake was reached. The unsuspecting pirate invited them to approach, and they could have howled with remorse as he patted their heads. Twilight was falling, and his eyesight had been sharper, but he was evidently staggered by the eccentric appearance of the offering. He coughed, raised his eyebrows, but, admitting that it was not the without but the within, attacked the ribbon with renewed confidence. Then the pirate fell back as if he had been shot, until, as if doubting his own eyesight, he planted his spectacles more firmly on the end of his nose, and took one long, comprehensive look: a surface plowed through by grooves to which still clung ragged bits of sugar, the whole proclaiming the sentiment "To Our Faithful Teacher," not by what was there, but by what was not.

Then it was that the benevolence faded out of the pirate's horn spectacles as he lowered them upon the culprits, and then it was that their innocent confidence in human benevolence was indefinitely shattered. With a prophetic instinct of woe they fled, pursued—

such was their bad conscience—by a pirate of abnormal proportions, who attempted their destruction by hurling at them a gigantic cake on which the fatal inscription “To Our Faithful Teacher” burned in letters of fire.

IV

AUNT JOSSELIN sat at the window that afternoon, and watched in vain for the twins. Twilight came, but not a sign of them. Suddenly the bell gave a spasmodic peal, and she opened the door. She stood transfixed, for she knew him at once; but it was hard to reconstruct a young Duymar van Twist out of this limping old man, who carried in his arms a big crumpled package that looked strangely familiar. Her cheeks flushed as she stared first at him and then at his fatal burden.

“My God, Josselin!” and he sank on the wooden settle outside; and though he had not thought of her for twenty-five years, he bowed his head over the ruined cake and sobbed.

“Duymar!”

But at the touch of her hand he leaped to

his feet, and the cake, whose destiny was woe, fell between them with an awful thud; and without a word Duymar limped down the mill steps. Then Aunt Josselin picked up the familiar package, and sank on the settle as she contemplated the wreck; and there she sat and cried until "To Our Faithful Teacher" was outlined in tears.

As for the two culprits, they emerged from the mill-cap, where they had taken refuge, and crept past Aunt Josselin's door, and saw her reading by the light of a candle, and the sacred chest of drawers was open, and it was flooded by a pile of old, old love-letters, the letters Duymar had sent back thirty-five years before.

It was the holy eve of St. Nicholas.

There was a threatening of snow in the low December sky, and the wind cut like a lash as it swept over the frozen meadows. The very night to crowd about the fire and in whispers to tell blood-curdling tales, until through the moaning of the wind could be heard a ghostly tread down the dim corridor — St. Nicholas himself, with a deep, celestial voice (singularly familiar) and supernatural

information about the most trifling misdeeds. Then, children, for a good conscience!

Kitwyk was ready for St. Nicholas, and what scrubbing and polishing could do had been done, and early lights were beginning to twinkle in the windows. The wings of the windmill hung black and still, and in Great-aunt Josselin's room — according to immemorial custom — the twins were imprisoned to keep them out of mischief. But for the first time in seven checkered years a blight had fallen on them, and they were so subdued that Aunt Josselin tried in vain to revive their drooping spirits with barley-candy, quite unconscious how they clutched each other for secret support whenever she opened her chest of drawers. If St. Nicholas knew everything,—as the twins never doubted,—they had reason enough for forebodings.

In the village all work had ceased, only out of Mynheer Veenix's shop there streamed the delicious aroma of baking, and customers still shuffled through the withered chestnut leaves, piled high to the door, to fetch the afternoon rusks; and so it happened that the pirate found himself standing behind the cook from the mill.

He took his parcel, and trudged home, put the rusks on the table, and stirred the peat fire. It was too early to light the lamp, and the tea-kettle was not yet boiling, so he took his clarinet and piped up a bit, though his heart was heavy, so old he felt and forsaken. Old and forsaken, and it was the eve of St. Nicholas! With a groan he flung the clarinet on the table, so that the rusks fell out of their stiff, meager wrapping. There he sat, and stared before him, when slowly three words seemed to lift themselves out of the paper Mynheer Veenix had utilized in his commerce. They seemed to leap out of the yellow page, and to clutch at his heart: "My darling Duymar —"

"My God!" and he grasped it, "what is this?"

And the small yellow sheet was one of the old love-letters he had sent back to Josselin, and his eyes were so dim with tears that it was long before he could read. By the last flicker of daylight he strained his eyes across the yellow page, and at last, with a sob, he buried his face against the words, as if they could make him forget life and its sorrows.

Suddenly he remembered that the old letter had been wrapped about his rusks.

“My God, I must know!” and he tore out of the house without hat or cane, and he never paused until he shot into the Kitwyk shop, and there he fell back, for, before the counter, with just such another sheet in her hand, stood Josselin.

Paper, Mynheer Veenix was explaining to her, was a rare and precious article which he purchased, when offered, at a penny a pound.

“But these are my letters, and I must know where you got them!” and there was an excited flush on her old cheeks. “They were wrapped about my rusks.”

“May I see, Juffrouw van Geldern?”

But she waved him off, and her eyes filled with tears as she thought how all the rusks of Kitwyk had been wrapped in her old love-letters; and just then the door burst open, and there stood Duymar with a letter in his hand which she had written him thirty-five years before. She recognized it at once; and with a sense of grief and shame, as if the love and the letter were of yesterday, she sank on a keg of brown sugar and hid her face in her hands.

He came straight toward her.

"Josselin, this letter — it was wrapped about my rucks — did you care so little —"

The look she gave him!

She would have been out of the shop if something of the old and impetuous Duyymar van Twist had not returned, and he barred her way.

"Mynheer Veenix," he said sternly, "where did you get these letters?"

Mynheer Veenix's answer had the ring of conscious rectitude.

"The paper was sold to me by the twins, who reinvested the proceeds in barley-candy. I can hardly say that it was worth a penny a pound—"

Josselin fled into the street, the fatal letter still in her hand. She had been lighter on her feet, and Duyymar overtook her.

"Josselin!" He too had been younger, and he was out of breath.

The wind crackled the chestnut branches, and blew across his bare head, and he shivered. She stood still, the tears rolling down her old cheeks.

"Josselin," and he stretched out his hand, "give me that letter. It will comfort me

when I am lonely, for then I shall remember that once you did love me, you dear, splendid woman."

Great-aunt Josselin spoke very softly. "And do you still care, Duymar?"

"I care? O Josselin! Give me the letter."

"There is no need, Duymar. Why read in those old letters what you shall read in my life day by day, God willing?"

The tears fell down her cheeks, though she smiled.

"I must begin to take care of you, dear. Go home and fetch your coat and hat, and come to the mill. The children are waiting, for to-night is St. Nicholas. You will not leave me? Then we must go together."

AND so it was really St. Nicholas, modestly aided by the twins, who brought back her old lover to Great-aunt Josselin. As for the two culprits, she just took them in her arms and kissed their round, unworthy cheeks, and her eyes were full of tears—happy tears.

O tender and faithful Josselin!

A TRAGEDY OF KITWYK

BEYOND the fields and meadows, and the long lane of melancholy, wind-swept poplars, lay the peat-fields, dreary stretches of stubbly ground, overgrown, where it was not cut, exposing the black, oozy clay, by rank weeds and grasses and heath. The monotonous dead level was broken only by low black mounds or ricks, peat piled to dry in the sun and air, that looked in the falling twilight like a forgotten graveyard.

A flock of crows flew heavily across the low, gray sky, and the long lane of poplars that led to Ten Brink swayed in unison to a rising breeze. On the other side the village lay huddled about the church, which lifted its ancient cross as if to exorcise the spirits of the desolate fields; and in direct line of the cross, and as if sinking under its displeasure, stood a ruined cottage on the edge of the plain, outcast from the habitations of men.

and in it dwelt two lonely spirits, and one was an old woman, and the other was her son. At twilight they trudged home, their backs bent under heavy loads, and the displeasure of the world was upon them.

Once in the annals of Kitwyk a woman fell. There was not much to say for her except that she was faithful, for she never betrayed the name of the man. Kitwyk was terribly agitated, for it felt itself too weak to cope with a foundling. So a kind of lugubrious prenatal celebrity attached itself to the son of the woman, and such was the agitation of the town-council that the object of dispute was temporarily forgotten, so that Kitwyk was rejoiced to hear that the woman had disappeared, and was just congratulating itself at this simple solution of its perplexities, when one day, toward sunset, she reappeared, her child in her arms, and there was a light in her patient eyes stronger than the Burgo-master, the town-council, and charity.

Kitwyk resigned itself to the inevitable, though it reserved the right to assign her an abiding-place, and, as a bad example and an immoral pauper, she was relegated to a half-ruined cottage on the edge of the peat-field.

Toward evening the windows caught the glow of the sunset, but at night it lay forsaken and dreary, with the fitful flames of the peat fire glowing through the cracked panes across the dull landscape. The woman sat by the hearth and rocked her baby on her breast, and when the baby gave a grip to her finger in his sleep, for he was a mighty fellow, then she laid her cheek against the flaxen head and sobbed for joy, and quite forgot that she was an outcast.

For a long time the baby was nameless. One Sunday she went to church. It was a summer morning, and the very peat-fields, with a sense of shame, had donned a little shabby green over the black earth.

The wooden pews for respectable sinners had backs, some of the elect had cushions,—Mevrouw van Loo had a foot stool,—but for the despised there was reserved an ignominious bench in a drafty corner in direct line of the pulpit, so that the Dominie could hurl his invectives at a proper and uncomplaining object.

This morning the old Dominie preached a discourse on David and Goliath, and the despised one on the bench folded her hands, and

a rapt smile crept over her face, and it was still there as she scudded home. She had found a name at last, the only perplexity was which one—David or Goliath? The boy gave promise of being a mighty man some day; Goliath seemed a fit name, but then she remembered with a pang that the great Goliath had been slain by the little David. She lifted the door-latch in dire perplexity. At sight of her he stretched out his arms. Had not the Dominie said that the young David was beautiful and ruddy, and that God had loved him and helped him to kill the giant?

"My David, my David," and she took him in her arms and cried over him, because she had given him the only thing she had to give—a name; and so, having entered on his inheritance, David proceeded to grow to man's estate.

II

AND David's mother toiled early and late like the men, and for her child's sake she longed not to be despised. But one day an edict went forth from the town-council: David, son of the unwedded Denys, must go to school, or he would prove a disgrace to Kitwyk.

When Denys closed the door on the messenger of evil, she sank on the settle beside the hearth. Then, out of the corner in which he had hidden when his doom was pronounced, he crept and buried his curly head in his mother's lap, and for the first time in her life she was unmindful of him in this new and great trouble.

"Now he will learn to despise me," she thought. "God have mercy!"

Not till years after did she realize that God had answered her prayer. He never learned to despise her; for, though his young body was strong, there was that lacking in his poor mind which would make him comprehend that his mother was an outcast and that he had no name. And so the years passed on.

One night the two sat before the peat fire, she binding brooms, he staring intently at the flames. The snow was falling, and blew in gusts against the windows, through which the fire-light struggled and lay in lurid patches across the snow.

Suddenly he looked up from the flames. "Mother," he said, "would you be happier if your name were written in the church register?"

Her hands fell in her lap, and she stared at him and held her breath.

"You would be happier, would you not, mother?" he persisted.

With a cry she hid her face from her son. "You do not understand, David; you do not understand."

"If all good women's names are written in the church register, why is not yours?"

"David, David!"

She dragged herself to him and hid her poor face on his knee, and he smoothed her hair with his rough hand and sank into silence; and the storm shook the frail house, and a cry went up from the world as if souls in anguish were lashed across space by the bitter winter gale.

III

He was still a child to Denys when he was in reality a big, awkward man, his broad back bent by toil, and with a shuffling gait and long, strong arms. He had a slow mind and only one idea, but that bore him company as he dug peat, it followed him along the canal towing the canal-boats, it made him forget cold, hunger, and weariness. Sometimes he

sat for hours brooding. Once—by that time the idea seemed very familiar—he laughed out loud, the first time since he was a child.

“David, David, my son!” and his mother grasped his shoulder, and she was white and trembling.

“Of what are you afraid, mother?”

She sank on a stool and hid her face, and he looked at her in dismay. For a moment he wanted to comfort her and tell her about his idea, but before he could put it into slow words she had gone about her work.

THE time came when the pent-up wrath of the town-council broke forth. That a person, so to speak, of light character should be permitted to breathe the air of Kitwyk, and never be punished for her sin, presented itself with renewed vigor. The cottage on the peat-field was acknowledged to be a blot on the immaculate landscape. One day the woman Denys was called before the worshipful town-council. The door was timidly opened, and she stood on the threshold. She wiped her face on her old blue apron as an act of humility, for the sight that met her eyes was very impressive. Seven awful gentlemen with red

faces sat about a green baize table, and, as if with one accord, they stared at her. She knew each one individually, had often sold them brooms without quailing, but collectively they were very terrible. And, suddenly, as she stood before them, her back bent and her face seamed by wrinkles, a consciousness of her old sin, which was not always in her thoughts, came to her, and her eyes, looking restlessly about, fell before theirs. She wiped her hands on her apron, and shuffled about in her wooden shoes. It was Mynheer van Steen who, in the cause of virtue, broke the news to her—the house on the peat-field was to be torn down.

She did not seem to comprehend, for she glanced hesitatingly from one to the other, lingering a moment longer on the big, dull face of the Burgomaster—it was old Lucas van der Velde, who was staring with unwinking intentness through the diamond-shaped panes at the town-pump.

With an unreasonableness characteristic of her, she said nothing; so it was further announced to her that, as there was no other place for her in Kitwyk, she must go. There was an asylum for old women in Sippken

open to her, while David, her son, being an able-bodied man, could earn his living on any fishing-smack.—What would become of David if she should die? and supposing David were to die?

For the first time the unreasonable creature broke the silence. She began to moan, and so distracted the town-council that she was graciously permitted to withdraw; and Kitwyk felt that it had been a champion of morality.

When David came home that night there was no light in the cottage window, nor on the hearth as he raised the latch and stumbled against something. It was his mother. He raised her in his strong arms, and stroked her hands, and called her softly; and at last she opened her eyes, and, at the rare smile in his dull face, she drew him toward her as if he were a child again.

"Wait, mother," and he stroked her cheek; "you shall be happy yet, I promise you—I, David, your son." And, straightening his bent back with a new air of importance, he shuffled out of the house.

IV

AN hour after, two men struggled and scuffled down the forsaken road. One had his hands tied behind his back, a bandana handkerchief gagged his mouth, and his cocked hat was jammed over his eyes — and David, the son of the woman, held him in a grip of steel.

“‘Write her name in the book,’ said I. ‘She is n’t married,’ say you. Why, if that ’s all to make her happy, she shall have the richest and greatest husband in all Kitwyk — and that ’s you!” and David dragged his victim after.

A dense mist rose from the black marsh, and the light from the cottage fell on it in long, dull rays. David threw open the door, and with a deft turn of his right arm flung the outraged Burgomaster to the feet of the old woman, and there he lay, an inert, groaning mass; and then David laughed for the second time in his life.

“If you must have a husband, here is one,” he shouted in triumph. “I said I would make you happy.”

“David — David, my son, what have you done?”

With trembling hands the woman helped the chief magistrate of Kitwyk to rise, and so, after twenty-five years, her hand touched his again. He shrank back from her.

"You shall pay for this, and so shall that brute, your son!" and his eyes glared like a wild beast's, and the veins on his forehead stood out like whip-cords. There was a sudden silence, and then his shifty, scowling gaze met hers. Not a word was said, but a ghastly terror filled his eyes. He looked a moment, with a kind of horrified scrutiny, at the face of David, who stared at him with a vacant smile; and then he staggered out of the house, and David's mother stood in her place like an image of stone.

"Mother," said David, "he would have made a good husband. I told him he was wanted, and he came willingly enough until he knew where. Then I tied his hands, for fear of losing him."

When Denys at last roused herself she was alone.

KITWYK depended for its measurements of time on neither clocks nor sun-dials, but on old Kobus, the night-watchman, who in turn

depended on the rooster of Jonkheer van Loo. This methodical fowl was one of a breed that crowed at five o'clock every morning, and for thirty years a Van Loo rooster had roused old Kobus stumping along and calling the hours in a nasal sing-song, a good, solid blast on his horn being forbidden except in case of dire necessity—the last occurring three hundred years before, when a ghostly posse of Spanish troopers clattered over the cobblestones toward the castle of Count Egmont.

Never yet had a Van Loo rooster crowed at any other time but as Kobus in his nightly perambulations reached the outskirts of Kitwyk, where lay the peat-fields under a black sky shot with gray at the sullen breaking of dawn. The blameless burghers of Kitwyk slept, and Kobus stumped along like a gigantic cabbage under his nine capes, dozing gently, such was his skill, and his lantern whacking his shins. A black night, with a rising breeze that lashed the ragged poplars leading to Ten Brink. Suddenly, in the midnight silence, a cock crowed—an inexperienced young fowl who mistook a glare for daybreak. It was a mistaken, melancholy note, but it

pierced through Kobus's methodical dreams and woke him to the one chance of his life.

His lantern dropped with a crash, his knees wobbled, and the blast he blew was but a feeble one to rouse the old echoes asleep since that ancient Spanish raid.

"Fire! Fire!" and he stumbled across the market-place and thumped frantically against the Burgomaster's front door, and Kitwyk leaped out of bed, as his Honor, with his cocked hat crowning his night-cap,—he still had so much presence of mind,—tore open the window. All Kitwyk shrieked for information, and that night were displayed many strange fashions in night-caps.

From the distant peat-fields the forked flames and the rolling smoke swirled and whirled a blood-red path to the sky, and in the midst of the flames stood one ungainly figure, its fantastic shadow flung across the stubble and the ricks as the wind caught the blaze.

Huh! but old parchment and book-covers burn gloriously! Armed with a long pole, David, the son of the unwedded Denys, with a lunge of his huge shoulder, gave a shove to such venerable volumes as declined to burn.

When they burst into flame, three hundred years of old church registers, he roared with joy. Now there was no woman in Kitwyk better than his mother! And he hugged himself as he thought of her great joy.

“Mother! Mother!”

She was already flying across the stubbly fields, her gray hair lashing her face.

“See, mother, the church books in which they would not put your name!”

She flung herself on her knees and tore at the blazing pile. He stood staring stupidly at her, his mouth open.

“My God! My God!” She fell back, beaten by the flames and smoke.

Suddenly out of the night the church bells rang a wild alarm, and down the highway there sounded the hurry and clatter and tramping of feet. Armed with blunderbusses, pitchforks, and rusty swords, the crowd bore down on them, in their midst the Burgomaster, his dressing-gown flapping about his legs, and his face, under his night-cap and cocked hat, ghastly white. As one stricken to the soul, Denys cowered before him, her singed hair hanging about her face, her burned hands huddled in the rags of her dress. “He loves

me," she murmured, "and he does not understand." Then she looked straight into the sullen eyes of the Burgomaster of Kitwyk: "Have mercy, for he had no father," and at these words his Honor breathed again.

V

So there was, for the first time in the memory of its oldest inhabitant, a criminal in Kitwyk, and the problem was what to do with him, as the dungeons under the town-hall had, since time immemorial, been devoted to storing winter potatoes and municipal oil-cans. For the present the wretched culprit was immured in the sacristy which he had robbed, in company with the charred remains of the stolen records. Kitwyk, having regained its mental balance, acknowledged that his arrest was a terrible blunder, for to support a criminal in idleness for the greater part of his career was felt to be a drain on the public treasury. The town-council yearned enthusiastically to have him escape, and they gave him every opportunity: but, with an unreasonableness probably inherited from his mother, he declined. There being nothing else to do, Da-

vid was summoned before the town-council to hear his doom, to which he listened with a vacant smile.

Because of his great crime, and because of the parental benevolence of the town-council, he was to be bound out as a sailor, on the merchantman *Hesperus*, to sail for Java in a week. David received his sentence still smiling vacantly, indifferent even to the further benevolence of Kitwyk when it was added that he might now go home to his mother to help her cut peat for the winter, as there was no knowing when he would come back.

So the one criminal of Kitwyk shuffled home, and when his old mother heard his doom she sank on a bench in a terrible tremble that never left her from that day forth, and the hand of God was indeed heavy upon them.

Autumn passed, and winter came with snow and ice and storm, and the stubble of the fields lay in frozen ridges, and the wind swept across the plains.

Every evening, after twilight, an old bent woman crept down the forsaken road, peering about in wistful search of one who would

never come again, for divine justice was with Kitwyk, and the burden was at last lifted from its municipal shoulders. After many months a message had reached the town-council that David, son of the unwedded Denys, had been drowned off the coast of Java in a sudden squall.

"God's will be done!" and the Burgomaster blew a blast on his bandana handkerchief, and a great relief was visible on his features, for he was nothing if not patriotic. "And now inform the woman."

It was evening and bitter cold, and the winds blowing across the fields cut like lashes, as an indignant messenger of sorrow, armed with a lantern, shouldered his way across the stubble and thumped against the door, and stood blowing his fingers, waiting. As no one came, he kicked it open.

"What do you mean by letting me wait? Get up! I've something to tell you."

But the unwedded Denys, on whom the hand of God had lain so heavily, did not stir, for she was dead, and her dead cheek rested on the peat her David had cut and piled on the hearth, on which no fire had burned for weeks; for, being nothing if not unreasonable,

she could not destroy the last thing his poor faithful hands had touched, and so, rather, she had died of hunger and cold, and her face was still wet with tears, and her hand lay on her heart as if that had been—broken.

A ROMANCE OF KITWYK

I

ITS hero was only Jan Osterhoupt, the cobbler. He lived where the road straggles into the poplar lane of Ten Brink, and as he also made the wooden shoes in which Kitwyk clattered about, there was always a raft of young ones pressing their noses against the dingy panes and clamoring for the chips and shavings that littered the hobbly clay floor. Doubled up over the cobbler's bench sat Jantje, his sister, patching old boots. She was a little hump-backed creature, with eyes like patient stars.

Only when Saskia lingered in the doorway would they pause in their work; and if there was no answering light in her moody eyes, it was but just, for Jan Osterhoupt, her father, had done her a great wrong in life — he had married her mother.

You see, once, when he was young, he departed from the ways of his father, who had

been the cobbler of Kitwyk for fifty years, and went into the wide world to seek his fortune. Destiny took him to France as a humble gardener of kitchen fruits, and as such the great Revolution overtook him as he fastened a branch of yellow apricots to the wall of an old château whose glory had long departed. There was a Vicomte de la Tellière, a harmless, lonely man, who was studying a butterfly's wing through a microscope when the Revolution stormed up the rickety stairs, and he was arrested. Mlle. de la Tellière, his daughter, lay senseless across the threshold.

Because a spring of the old state coach — a moth-eaten scarlet-and-gold structure, and the only vehicle in the village — was broken, the prisoners were left in the château overnight, guarded by a raft of dirty patriots, among whom was a worthy young man who the day before had fastened the apricots to the garden wall, and who swore he could be trusted. There was the last of some noteworthy wine in the cellar of La Tellière, and it is possible that in their ardor the children of the Republic drank too often to the triumph of liberty. At all events, the next

morning, when the chariot lumbered up from the smithy, M. le Vicomte and his daughter, and the young man they had so trusted, had basely disappeared.

Then it was that patriotism rose to a sublime height, and offered a thousand francs reward for the arrest of one Jan Osterhoupt, accused of aiding in the escape of two dangerous enemies of the Republic. M. le Vicomte's estate was confiscated, and the old house pillaged and set on fire.

Gaily it burned, and the next day nothing was left but the blackened walls and a scorched willow-tree that knocked softly against the broken panes. On the crumbling garden wall the apricots still hung, yellow as gold.

God alone knows the story of that attempted flight, but it is certain that M. le Vicomte never reached the friendly shelter where he was to meet Jan Osterhoupt and his daughter. Probably he was recognized and guillotined without ceremony—a common occurrence; and so there wandered into the world two outcasts—a dull, frightened girl, with not the brightest of wits after that night, and a man whose only worldly posses-

sion was the price set on his head. And Jan Osterhoup, being destined for great honor, one day married the daughter of M. le Vicomte; and Kitwyk might never have known how, having gone in search of a fortune, he had found it, if, years afterward, a shabby, sorrowful man had not shuffled his way through the fallen leaves of Ten Brink with a bundle in his arms. He paused at the cobbler's shop, his hand on the rusty latch; then he lifted it slowly, and the sunlight straggled past him and rested on two bent figures within,—older, sadder, and poorer.

"Father," the man at the door faltered, and the cobbler looked up, dazed.

"Jan—Jan! have you come back again? and where is your fortune?" and old Adam's joints creaked as he stumbled to his feet and peered at the wanderer.

And Jan Osterhoup, having seen the world and brought home his fortune in an old shawl, turned away and sobbed.

HALF an hour afterward Adam Osterhoup's bow legs were already planted on the sanded floor of William the Silent, and he had piped out his news. His best coat

was flung over his dirty apron, and he was out of breath with running. The Burgomaster was blistering his noble back at the tap-room fire; he roared at the ancient man:

"Close the door, you old fool! Well, now, what about your son Jan?"

In all his shabby life old Adam had vainly pined for consideration, perhaps because he contributed nothing to society but a bad smell of leather. Now was his chance.

"Jan 's home with a fortune—I said he 'd be!—he 's married a countess, and—" here he sobbed because of his great joy and pride—"and they 've set a price on his head."

Kitwyk was aghast with apprehension. If this was not madness it was anarchy. There was a scuffle backward; only the pirate, smoking a pipe in the chimney-corner, was unmoved—but he was reckless by trade, one might say. In its dire perplexity, Kitwyk turned to him as the only judge of romance, and he nodded. The world was a queer place—as an ex-pirate, he ought to know; so Kitwyk emerged, and the Burgomaster, barricaded behind a high-backed chair, asked, "Where is the countess?"

Here the weakness of Adam's case betrayed itself.

"She is dead," and he was conscious that his one chance in life was vanishing. In his despair, he ventured a little nearer to the great man. "But, if you please, your Worship, there is a countess, only it 's a very little one."

Now Kitwyk was not only human, but it was curious; and so at last his wildest dream was fulfilled: he sat in the Burgomaster's chair, and he might have drowned himself in hot grog free of expense.

"To think," he sobbed in his pride, "that I should have a son whose head is worth a thousand francs!" and Kitwyk assented.

"Blexem!" cried the Burgomaster, "such an illustrious citizen shall be properly welcomed!" and he clapped on his cocked hat, and, with his gold-headed cane under one arm and Adam under the other, he led the way, and Kitwyk straggled after.

The sun was just setting, and the wind knocked the linden twigs softly against the little window. The door was open for the last flicker of twilight, and at the cobbler's bench, straining his eyes, sat a sorrowful man with a crook in his back, as if he had sat there forever. By the fire, in Jantje's

arms, a baby struggled a little red head out of a ragged shawl, and wailed at sight of the Burgomaster — and that was the countess.

His Worship took in the scene in one comprehensive glare, and dropped Adam's arm.

Jan Osterhought rose humbly, his head on his breast — the head worth a thousand francs.

The Burgomaster stared at him from head to foot; he was inspired.

"A countess marry you! a price set on that!" Indeed, Jan Osterhought's head was not much to look at. "Never!"

A sob broke the awful stillness; but it was only old Adam who sobbed, because he had lost his last claim to consideration; and he stood in the doorway in a daze, while the properly outraged magistracy of Kitwyk disappeared down the poplar lane.

But from that day he was a changed man. He refused to work, and, instead, he haunted the tap-room of William the Silent, and looked with sullen resentment at his son Jan, who pegged away at the boots of Kitwyk as if no noble lady had ever checkered his career. But one comfort old Adam had when he died: he left his resentment, his only

legacy, to Jan's girl, Saskia, and her soul was full of bitterness against her father.

Once only, in the pain of his heart, did Jan Osterhoupt venture to boast. He was not quite without honor, he said wistfully. There was a price set on his head. Only give him up in France, and there was a fortune waiting.

And Saskia, crouched in the firelight, looked suddenly up at her father and held her breath.

"You!" and her young voice cut like a whip-lash, and she laughed.

The whir of Jantje's spinning-wheel fell across the rising wind, and the patch on the noble shoe of Mevrouw van Loo, in Jan's lap, was blurred with tears. The linden tree knocked with ghostly branches against the lattice, and Saskia dreamed, watching the flames.

II

IN the splendor of the summer noon a devil-may-care, shabby young wanderer strolled down the highway singing, a knapsack on his back, a stick in his hand. He looked about him with keen, curious eyes, and once he shook his head at the level landscape, stretched himself with hearty good will, and

yawned. The ripening fields swaying softly in the light breeze, the windmills swinging their black sails lazily, the cows chewing their eternal cud, were beginning to pall.

"Oh, for a breath of Spain!" he cried, and, being a lucky fellow, just then he came to a break in a yellow wheat field by the roadside, and there, amid the ripe grain, the poppies and corn-flowers, lay a young maid fast asleep in the drowsy peace of high noon, the locusts humming noisily, and her scythe at her side.

"The gods love the heedless," he cried in sheer amazement and gratitude. "Some day I will paint her thus, and I shall be famous. Was there ever such glorious hair! Now, should she waken, will her eyes be two dark stars, or will a Dutch cow look lazily at me? Shall I let her sleep? Or — what is a kiss? A glint of the sun on a summer's day. Meddling bee! Thief! Those are my roses! Child — child — I but saved you from the bee!"

With a cry she pushed him away, and stumbling to her feet, she took to flight among the tangled wheat.

"You beautiful child, forgive me," he called after her in light remorse.

She paused, as if touched by a spell, and looked back. Between them was the yellow grain and the down-trodden path.

"Most beautiful of maids, are you dumb?" he cried across the swaying wheat.

There was flight in the poise of her lithe young body, but she lingered, and a smile began to quiver on the edge of a frown. It was not with an apple that the serpent tempted Eve! He came nearer. He was young and good to look at; he did not understand repulse.

The frown had quite fled, and a sudden smile touched her eyes, her mouth, and the dimple in her round chin.

"Am I really beautiful?"

Her lips were parted in frank vanity, and he felt that the nearest ditch, the stagnant mirror of the passing clouds, would have answered the purpose as well as he.

"You know you are."

"No!"

"Do you speak the truth?" he asked curiously.

"Yes."

"Well, then, my child, you are the most beautiful young maid I ever saw. Does that satisfy you?"

Never to have known that she was so beautiful! In her passionate sorrow for herself she forgot his existence.

"Wait—wait!" he pleaded. "Shall I never see you again?"

She looked back and laughed.

"At least come back and I will tell your fortune. I am a magician."

The locusts chirped and the wind swayed the yellow wheat. A barge with a dull red sail glided slowly between the stunted willows along the canal. The wings of the Kitwyk mill turned slowly.

She stretched out her hand across the bending wheat, her eyes dilated with ignorant awe. It was a peasant's hand, hard worked and rough. It sobered him.

"Much love shall be yours," he murmured, "but whether true or long, life only can tell." His slender fingers looked so white against her rough palm,—the blood rushed to her down bent face.

"That means flight," and he touched a line: "that, a great city: this, youth that passes on the wings of a fevered fancy,—joy like the froth of wine,—a short life like a dream, and then"—he paused and looked into her in-

tent eyes, and he forgot her peasant hands—"death."

She snatched her hand roughly out of his grasp.

"That 's not a fortune,—much you know!"

"Child, child, at least I can prophesy of the past,—my kiss was the first."

Down the dusty road there plodded an old woman whose back was bent under a heavy load. The girl saw her.

"I must go," she said hurriedly.

"Tell me your name?"

"Saskia."

"Shall I never see you again?" he repeated in foolish entreaty.

"Who knows?—in the great city—perhaps." She laughed and went down the road swinging her scythe, and he watched her until she was lost among the poplars of Ten Brink.

The old woman trudged past him; she was poor and crippled, and her eyes were very patient. Neither heeded the other. He awoke as from a day-dream, gave a vicious cut to a scarlet poppy bending across his path, and went on his way; but he sang no more, and the next passer-by crushed under-foot the poppy's broken scarlet petals.

III

The spring twilight lay on the peat-field. The solitary cottage on the edge caught the last glow of sunlight on its window-panes. Here in righteous exile lived the one woman of Kitwyk who had sinned, and at nightfall the peat field, the cottage, and the woman were avoided as being singularly accursed. So after sunset, when her child slept, she was alone in the world with her thoughts, while her fingers bound brooms of willow twigs, and the wind swept up from the dikes and rustled the scanty grass on the field, beyond which, far from her unworthy neighborhood, lay Kitwyk huddled about the little old church.

Down the lonely road came two figures—a hump-backed woman and an old man who carried a bundle across his shoulder. In the silence of the spring twilight, the woman rocking her child heard the distant footfall and looked wistfully after them, for Jantje was weeping bitterly. The way led out of the village into the wide world. At the turn of the road they held each other's hand, and Jantje covered her face with her apron.

"My good Jantje, see, it is but to cross to

France and ask my way to the old village. It is only right that I should go; and, Jantje, the child shall be happy yet," and he gently stroked her hand. "How well I remember! —the town-hall stands on the market-place, and before it there is a French king in bronze. I shall go up to the council-chamber and I shall say, 'Here am I, Jan Osterhoupt, upon whose head you set a price. I claim the reward.' They 'll not care who gets it, having me. Then—for I have thought it all out—I will ask for some good priest, and he shall send the money to Saskia, and she will be rich. When, in the years to come, she is happy, Jantje, then tell her—no, never tell her."

He loosened her hand gently and looked once more toward Kitwyk melting into twilight, with here and there a lamp beginning to twinkle, shouldered his bundle, and walked resolutely on. Then Jantje came to herself.

"Jan! Jan! Come back, Jan!" and she stumbled after him. But he was beyond her reach, and she stood among the lonely fields, as one lost, till there crept out of the cottage a poor outcast woman, who took her in her arms, and she laid her head on the breast

of the sinner and wept as one weeps for the dead.

THE stork's nest on the Burgomaster's house was a scene of agitation. Father stork, on one leg, craned his neck over the very edge of the gable, and described what he saw to mother stork, who was minding her own business. What a power of language he had! Her matronly bosom swelled with pride. What he saw first was the Burgomaster's dog Polder nipping such calves as attracted him; then came Toby van Loo, leaping into the air and barking like mad; then a screaming flock of geese that had been roped into the procession as they were innocently promenading the highway. And at last came the wizard and the princess—at least, Kitwyk said he must be a wizard, and father stork said she must be a princess, she was so beautiful.

The princess rode the old horse that drew the lumbering green wagon, and the wizard stalked on before. Kitwyk was impressed by the wizard's cap, which was tall and square, and covered with weird characters. As for the princess, there had never been

seen such big black eyes and such a little red mouth, and when she threw kisses right and left Kitwyk was not unmoved.

"She is the most beautiful creature in the world!" father stork cried in ecstasy. "She must be a princess."

"Don't be a fool," mother stork snapped; "she's a play actress, that's all — the painted hussy!"

Here his Honor, the Burgomaster, flung open the window below.

"What an infernal clatter those storks make!"

The green wagon had been drawn to one side of the market-place, out of the sacred neighborhood of the church and the yellow parsonage behind the linden hedge.

The old horse was unharnessed, and some benevolent busybody had brought him a bundle of young grass, which he was gratefully munching.

"What are they doing now?" asked mother stork.

"She's singing a song," and father stork closed his eyes with a fatuous expression.

"On the market-place? A nice princess!" Mother stork knew the ways of the world.

"But such a song—and you know I'm not much given to music."

Even Kitwyk acknowledged the spell, which was broken only by the wizard's going about with a plate, while the princess strummed an old guitar, her beautiful black eyes hungrily intent on the pennies. The spring sun shone cruelly on her tarnished tinsel, the patched, spangled petticoat, and the red in her hollow cheeks. The wizard came back with an ugly look in his eyes.

"Dance it out of 'em if you can't sing it, wench!" for the harvest had been small.

The woman shrank back as if from a blow.

A girl elbowed her way through the crowd. She was a lithe young thing in a patched blue gown, a blue kerchief over her hair. She stood breathless, watching the woman who danced. The wizard noticed her as he thrummed the guitar strings—she was a handsome girl.

The dancer came down on the point of her toes in a whirl of dirty silk and dull spangles, the brass chains about her thin neck tinkled, the strings gave a final crash, and Saskia awoke from a day dream. Kitwyk turned on its wooden heels, but she still stood spell

bound, her red lips parted with the quick beating of her heart.

"Come back! come back!" shouted the wizard, "and behold a wonder!" Kitwyk hesitated, then clattered back open-mouthed, and gave a gasp when, with a sudden gesture of his lean brown hand, he snatched the blue kerchief from Saskia's head, and, tossing it in the air, out flew three milk-white doves, and about her fell a shower of crocuses, yellow, purple, and white. The doves flew away, and Kitwyk shivered deliciously and edged farther off from Saskia, who still stood with folded hands, staring upward.

It was popular opinion that the wizard was either in league with Saskia or the devil. But Saskia was not in league with the wizard. Her soul was so full of wonder and longing that she did not notice how Kitwyk clattered away and left her standing quite alone in the market-place. The doves had fluttered down and were picking corn among the cobblestones, the princess was in the cart taking off her draggled finery, and the wizard sat on the cart steps counting the pennies. Out of the corner of his eye he watched Saskia; then he looked up and smiled.

For a moment her heart stopped beating; to be noticed by the dispenser of happiness! Then the air seemed full of a sudden tumult, and a passionate, imploring young voice cried—her own voice heard as if in a dream—“Take me with you! Take me with you!” And the wizard put his lean brown finger to his lips, looked stealthily about, and nodded softly.

IV

THE red-roofed houses of La Tellière peeped out from among the apple trees in full blossom. The hedges and trees were all of a green mist, for it was springtime. An old man, ragged and foot sore, hobbled along the cobblestones, and a gang of urchins clattered after. In the market place a kirmess was in full swing; garlands and banners were festooned from house to house, and the statue of the old French king, leaning on his mighty two-handed sword, looked grimly down at the turmoil below. Over all, from the old church steeple the tricolor floated in the spring breeze, and the air was full of the braying of a brass band, the tooting of horns, the shrill

laughter and chatter of voices, the clatter of sabots, and the twang of a lonely fiddle, while through the narrow lanes surged the crowd, and on the fresh, clear air there floated the aroma of kirmess—apple-blossoms dashed with fresh-baked gingerbread. An old man stood on the edge of the market-place in a daze, staring at the turmoil.

He turned, quivering—a joker struck him with a blown-out bladder.

“Take your sour face away!”—and he was shoved aside—but for an iron railing he would have fallen. It was the railing of the town-hall; the same old Justice stood over the doorway, and held the same old broken scales. He clung to the iron chain; the turmoil made him dizzy—he who was on his road to death.

In the corridor a gendarme took him roughly by the shoulder.

“This is no place for beggars.”

“I am no beggar.”

“Your business, then?”

“To see the mayor.”

“Have you an appointment?”

“It is a matter of life and death,” and Jan Osterhoupt could hear the terrible beating of

his own heart. "I have come — to deliver up a criminal — to justice."

"An informer!" and the man looked at him with undisguised contempt. "Well, then, come!"

The door of the council chamber closed behind them.

"I was not to be disturbed!" the mayor cried sharply. The table was littered with official papers. "You are disobeying orders."

"Your Honor, this man is an informer."

The explanation was sufficient. The mayor examined Jan Osterhoupt with a contemptuous scrutiny.

"An informer? Against whom?"

Then the old man raised his head proudly — the hour of reparation had come at last.

"Against myself," said Jan Osterhoupt.

As icy wind swept up from the sea, and the houses of Kitwyk were closed against the blast; there was not even a dog in the streets. In the castle of Ten Brink, Juffrouw de Kock sat by the kitchen fire and tried to read the Bible, but she looked up as the wind swept through the old banqueting hall, and said softly, "God have pity on all wanderers to night!"

Just then, down the stubble of the frozen road leading to Kitwyk there came a lonely wayfarer; the wind beat against him, and the fine snow stung his face. He dragged himself along, as if he had come many a weary mile. For a moment he stood in the shelter of the windmill, and took breath; then he went on, but more feebly, as if with a dull fear at heart. His footfall echoed on the frozen cobblestones of the market-place, and Juffrouw Rozenboom, ever active, vainly pressed her sharp nose against the window and peered into the darkness.

At last he reached the ghostly poplars of Ten Brink, swaying in the icy wind. He shuffled through the piled-up, decaying leaves. After many months he stood once more at his own threshold. Three times he took hold of the latch, but his courage failed him; he sank on the step and hid his face in his hands and sobbed.

In the window flickered a lamp; and, as the whir of the spinning-wheel fell across the wind, there came to Jantje, through the buzz of the wheel, a weak cry: "Jantje — Jantje!"

"It is the wind," she murmured, but she

trembled as she crept to the window to trim the lamp. How often in lonely nights had she lain awake hearing Jan's voice in the wind as it swept up from the sea! — And were he to come, and were he to ask, "Where is Saskia?"

The tears fell down her withered face. "Child, child, come back — only come back!" and she wiped the dull panes so that she who had strayed might, if God so willed, find her way back to the old home.

Then again, through the rise and fall of the wind, "Jantje — Jantje!" and she had torn open the door, and there, on the steps, in the winter wind and the whirl of the snow, lay a man.

"Jantje — Jantje!" and his gray head was on her breast, and his fading gaze sought her patient eyes. "When I told them why I had come, they only laughed at me, Jantje; they only laughed at me —"

And, his old head being worthless, and his last hope blighted, Jan Osterhoupt died.

And this was the romance of Kitwyk.

THE STORY OF LESKEN

I

THE world is such a small place! New York and Kitwyk — to think they ever had anything in common! Not that it was much, to be sure, for it was only old Lesken, who played the very last of the second violins in the orchestra of Wallack's theater — how many ages ago! — and who scratched away at his fiddle for dear life, only pausing when a string snapped — melodrama is so wearing on fiddle-strings. Eight chairs had old Lesken worn out in his corner, and the plush top of the orchestra railing had become old and shabby many a time with the weight of his heavy hand, as he sat lost in thought, or shaking his head at the play, as much as to say:

“You painted images, do you call this a play,—this grief, this misfortune? Why, I could show you —”

So ran his thoughts as his head sunk for-

ward on his breast—his old head, with its grizzled hair, and dim eyes that looked at fiction through a huge pair of silver spectacles perched on the end of a long, thin nose.

Who would have thought of a romance in connection with old Lesken, as he sat there with a look about him as if he had gone to bed in his clothes? He was always diving into the depths of a musty pocket for a red cotton handkerchief, and then for a little soiled paper parcel, out of which he took a comforting pinch of snuff, while the hero on the stage declared his undying love for the heroine, looking passionately over her head into the wings.

One night old Lesken heard a song, a simple melody, that made the man forget half a century. Though the worn hand still held the bow, fifty years had fled, and he was young again. Thousands of miles had disappeared, and he stood once more before his father's house in Kitwyk. The market place was flooded with sunshine, the pump was deserted, and the grass waved lazily between the cobble-stones. In the distance, the poplars of Ten Brink swayed in the summer breeze. A cow strolled artfully along the

canal bordered by the deep red clover-field of the Kitwyk windmill, and Jan de Les-



YOUNG DE LESKEN.

ken and the cow represented the "life" of Kitwyk. Perhaps young De Lesken found the peace slightly oppressive, for he stamped

his foot and paced up and down in a way which was most improper.

So thought his father as, looking out of the window, he caught sight of his son. Mynheer de Lesken was filled with righteous wrath, and leaning out, he cried:

"What are you doing there at this time of day, Jan? What will Mynheer van der Velde say, should he see you? Go to the counting room instantly!" Then the window closed with a phlegmatic deliberation that argued ill for the culprit.

Mynheer van der Velde lived over the way in a substantial dwelling of a buff color, with gabled roof, innumerable windows, and a green front door that boasted a brass knocker of dazzling brilliancy, and the pride of Mistress Betty's heart. Old De Lesken's remark was merely a chance shot; for, though Mynheer van der Velde really lay in ambush behind the muslin window-curtains, puffing at his long clay pipe, he was engrossed in watching the maid servants at the pump, and making mental notes of all such as loitered to gossip on the way. But if Mynheer van der Velde was thus seriously occupied, at least Mistress Betty had leisure enough to look at

Jan as he stood there, with the silver buttons of his coat and the buckles of his shoes glittering in the sunlight. There was a nameless grace even in the black ribbon that tied his long brown hair.

"All the other young Mynheers are so fat," and Betty stole another glance across.

However, Mynheer de Lesken was not born to be disobeyed, and at his words Jan



MISTRESS BETTY.

slowly disappeared into the house. For a moment the duster in Mistress Betty's little right hand stopped its godly work while she

heaved a gentle sigh, and such was her unwonted absence of mind that she knocked down a very hideous, but very sacred ornament, and, as she examined the injury done to the ugly little object, wondered what could for a moment have disturbed the calm of her placid life.

II

MYNHEER DE LESKEN was a well to do man—some said a rich man.

Once there had been a *Mevrouw*. Yes, fate had ruffled Mynheer's calm career with a wife,—peace to her gentle, troubled soul!—who had during her life-time been his constant worry, just as Jan was now.

"You're the son of your mother!" Mynheer would cry, in the climax of the battles with his heir.

But, perhaps, Jan's greatest crime—and, as he thought of it, Mynheer came as near shuddering as a phlegmatic Dutch burgher can—was that he played the violin. He filled the house with its high, clear tones till Mynheer, in a fit of rage, with his fingers in his outraged ears, strode up and down the room twice in succession,—a circumstance

which had not happened even when Mevrouw died.

Once before there had been such a scene : when Jan said that he wanted to be an artist — a violinist.

High words there had been between father and son. His son a musician — his son ! A beggar, a thief, an artist ! So Mynheer classified these professions. A beggarly fiddler, when there was an opening in the wholesale grocery business worthy of a king ! In bitterness of spirit the old merchant walked through his richly filled warehouses, and stood in stern contemplation of raisins and coffee and grains and molasses.

The divine art was represented in Kitwyk by Kobus, who held the position of town trumpeter. Kobus had left one of his legs in the Seven Years' War, and having, in this practical way, been cured of roving, settled down by the canal, and represented the divine arts in Kitwyk. He was the only artist Mynheer had ever seen ; and, good heavens ! his son wanted to become an artist !

Mynheer de Lesken's house lay uncompromisingly on the street, with neither tree nor grass-plot to relieve its white exterior.

It was only back of the house, beyond the beds of gorgeous tulips, that Mynheer's domain impressed you; there stood the great warehouses and the counting room, into whose windows a couple of apple trees nodded cheerily. Four clerks sat at the tall desk in the center of the large, bare room, while a smaller desk, in a state of chaos, stood deserted in a corner. The head clerk, old Dietrich, glancing at it, shook his long, wooden head disapprovingly. Length was Dietrich's chief characteristic, just as roundness was that of the other three. Thirty five years had he been in Mynheer's employ, and if faithfulness is rewarded, Dietrich was a candidate for a crown.

Suddenly there came through the open window the passionate, pleading tones of a violin, and Dietrich, looking up with a start and a frown, saw Jan at his attic window, with his violin under his chin, playing as if the world could live without sugar and molasses, and as if he, simple Jan de Lesken, could conjure up another world with fiddle and bow. Old Dietrich scratched his head under his sandy wig, in much displeasure. Striding to the window, he called to the unsuspecting culprit:

"Come down instantly, Mynheer, and finish your letter about the herrings!"

So Jan came back to the world and the herrings, and Jan's father, smoking a pipe in the family sitting-room, hearing all, glared at the portraits of his ancestors that lined the walls, as if bidding them bear testimony against such depravity.

"Don't scold, old fellow!" Jan cried, as he entered the counting-room. "Only let me play to you some day, and I'll show you that something besides herrings and molasses can touch your flinty old heart," and he laid his hand on Dietrich's shoulder.

"Mynheer Jan, you waste so much time," the other said half reprovingly, as Jan stooped to pick up his fallen pen.

"Why, I call *this* wasting time," cried Jan, pointing with scorn at the fat ledgers. "Anybody can do this; but not everybody can be an artist."

III

MYNHEER DE LESKEN, waking from his nap late one afternoon, was the victim of crossness and gout combined. Mynheer's chair and the table at his side were planted on a

little island of carpet in the exact center of the spotless, waxed floor. From this point of observation his sharp gray eyes reconnoitered in search of hidden dust and cobwebs.

Suddenly Mynheer rang a little bell that stood on the table beside him, and as a red-checked maid softly opened the door, she found him furiously staring at the very edge of the carpet before him.

"What do you call that, Cosette?"

Cosette examined the fatal mark, and, after a thoughtful pause:

"I should call it mud; mud from the street, Mynheer."

"I knew it, I knew it!" he cried in triumph; then, with a glare at Cosette, he exclaimed:

"Send Dietrich to me at once."

"In my house mud,—mud," he muttered as she left the room.

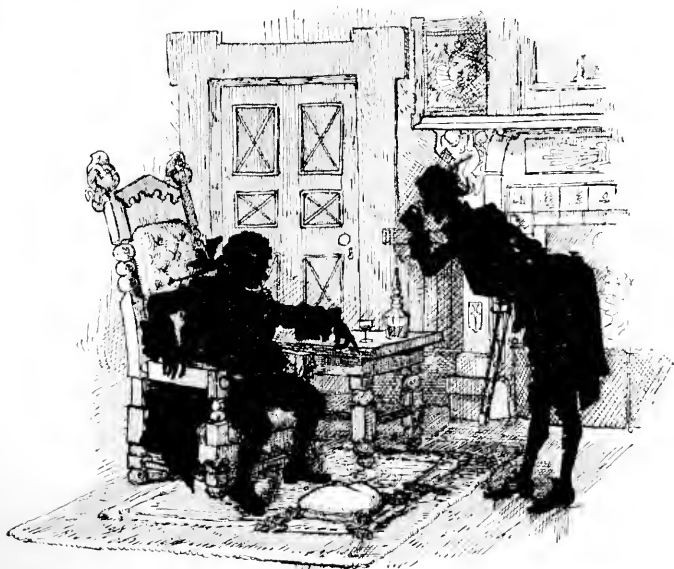
Dietrich looked in with misgivings, being uncertain if he were called in as adviser or victim. Neither was Mynheer's opening address re-assuring:

"Come in and be ——! Do you think I like to sit in a draft? Have you wiped your feet on the door mat?"

"Yes, Mynheer."

"Do you see that? I tell you this house will be turned into a pig-sty," he cried, pointing to the carpet.

"Don't go near, don't step on the carpet,"



DIETRICH EXAMINES THE DISASTER FROM A DISTANCE.

he interrupted himself, just as Dietrich was about to place an immense foot on the little island.

So Dietrich took out a pair of horn spectacles and examined the disaster from a distance.

"Mud! Mud brought in by my son Jan!" shouted Mynheer. "I tell you he is capable of anything, a fellow who brings mud into his father's house. But I'll end it! He shall not fill my house with mud and fiddles! I've made up my mind! He must marry, and then he can go to the devil with his fiddles and mud and his wife into the bargain."

"Mynheer Jan marry?" said Dietrich, dubiously. Then, in the character of adviser, he took a hard chair, and sitting outside the charmed circle, repeated, doubtfully:

"Mynheer Jan marry?"

"Certainly! He's old enough—twenty-three; don't you call that old enough? I do. That's enough, Basta!"

When Mynheer cried "Basta!" his word was law, and now only a special dispensation of Providence could keep young Jan single.

"Mynheer, if Master Jan must marry, it should be some one whom he will like."

"Stuff!" interrupted Jan's father.

"Not stuff, Mynheer; why make him unhappy? If he must marry, let it be Juffrouw Betty van der Velde. She alone will make him a suitable wife," and having given his advice he planted his feet firmly on the sacred carpet.

"Hum, hum!" murmured the matchmaker, and fell into a brown study.

Who will declare that the good man had no imagination, when we say that there appeared before him a pleasant vision of Mistress Betty filling his pipe and brewing a glass of grog for him?

Lastly, when he thought of two soft, brown eyes looking affectionately at him, the prospect was so enticing that now, thinking of it—yes, he would have married her himself, were it not so very much trouble.

"Hang the young dog; he shall have her," he thought, with a sigh, and, taking up a tiny steel mirror that lay at his side, he looked at the reflection of his fat, choleric, well-preserved old face.

"Juffrouw Betty—if I should try? Who knows?"

Dietrich was accustomed to his master's calm contemplation of his own charms, so he waited patiently till Mynheer, laying aside the glass, exclaimed with decision:

"Yes; he shall marry Juffrouw Betty!"

In those old days there were grand confabulations in regard to such a thing as a

marriage, and everybody was deeply interested in the matter, except, perhaps, the parties directly concerned. Jan did not see his father knock solemnly with the brass knocker at the spotless front door across the way. He was still unconscious when Mynheer commanded him to be ready at three o'clock that afternoon to call at Mynheer van der Velde's.

"Where you may perhaps see Juffrouw Betty," the old gentleman added, with a stiff wink in his right eye.

Never had Mynheer been so facetious before, and Jan stared; but imputing it to an extra allowance of grog,—such things happened in those days,—said nothing.

Mynheer van der Velde's room of state was open to receive the visitors; the room, with its angular furniture, slippery floor, and innumerable Van der Velde's staring down from the walls, and, over all, that air of painful neatness which will freeze the most cordial visitor. This was just what old De Lesken reveled in, so in great content he sat down on a hard, uninviting sofa, while Jan stood at the window and drummed a tune on the small diamond-shaped panes. Mynheer van der Velde had solemnity enough, and to spare,

"HE KISS'D THE LITTLE HAND."



as he entered, leading Mistress Betty by the tips of the fingers. As for this same Mistress Betty — well, well! one could forgive old De Lesken for gallantly advancing and kissing one rosy cheek — at which her father looked discomposed and Jan wondered. Juffrouw Betty lowered her brown eyes, and a pink blush came and went as Jan stepped forward to greet her. Mynheer de Lesken, taking her hand in his, stopped him.

“Jan, there is a great surprise in store for you. Be grateful to me, for I arranged it. This, sir, is Betty van der Velde now, but she is to be Mevrouw de Lesken and your future wife!”

With a half-uttered exclamation, “Father!” Jan had started back. His heart beat wildly; he could have rebelled against this — this — what? Against Betty? Silently blushing before him, with a look in her dark eyes as if she were quite content? No, impossible! Jan, seeing that look, surrendered, and, bending forward, he kissed the little hand that was as helpless as his own at the mercy of these old men, who stood by making mental calculations and hugely satisfied with their day’s work. Life was being shaped for Mynheer

Jan by his cautious father as it had been cut for all his ancestors.

Why should he complain? Love? Away with such foolish thoughts! What need of so useless an article? Will it bear interest? Can it be bartered? No! Then out of the way with it!

IV

Kobus camped out by the canal in a thatched cottage containing one room. With the fiction of a camp and a ruthless enemy in mind, he had everything ready for instant retreat. A great hearth there was; a bed in a corner; an easy-chair (with a romance attached). Beside the bed stood the trumpet wrapped in green baize, and over it, against the white-washed wall, hung Jan de Lesken's fate—a fiddle and bow.

How often Jan had heard the old man play on it the melodies he had learned in his progress through the world, believing what he said of elves who lived in the quaint wooden box and touched the strings with invisible fingers!

One never to be-forgotten day old Kobus placed the fiddle in his arms, and little by

little, taught him all he knew, till he discovered that, ignorant as he was, the boy played as only untaught genius can play. Like a couple of conspirators, they used to come to-



KOBUS AND HIS PUPIL.

gether of an evening, with the fear of Mynheer's righteous wrath before their eyes, and Kobus would tell stories of the Seven Years' War, interlarded with goblins, till Jan shivered even at the familiar plashing of the canal.

At last rumors reached Mevrouw's ears, and

Jan confessed, and his mother went by stealth to Kobus's house and heard her boy play; then she wept bitterly, as if old memories had been awakened. One day, in a moment of sheer insanity, she planned a surprise for Mynheer.

The door was opened, and Mynheer, waking from his nap, saw little Jan with his violin, followed by his mother. Pleading, she said to Mynheer:

"It is a surprise."

It was a surprise all round; for, as Jan played, Mynheer's face grew fiery red.

"Take that beggar's trash away," he shouted, "and don't let me hear it again! You'd like Kobus's place, would you, young man? As for you, Mevrouw, accept my congratulations: your son bears the strongest resemblance to you—ugh!" Mynheer cried in undisguised disgust, and so ushered them out of the room.

There is nothing like the hopelessness of a passion to make it strong. How could Jan help it that every lovely sound knocked at his heart's door? It was both his joy and his misfortune. Music was to him a purer, nobler language than earthly tongues; it filled

his soul with dreams that were but fantastic foolery to other men.

Kobus's house was his paradise; here all space became alive with the tones the young fellow drew from the violin, while Kobus looked on with proud eyes.

"You are my child," he would say. "When I die you will take the violin and trumpet and my sword, and keep them in memory of me, will you not? This house is to go to my old cousin, for what do you care for it? Are you not Mynheer Jan de Lesken?"

That was just his misfortune; to be Jan de Lesken, with his path in life so neatly marked out for him, that he awoke one fine morning and remembered that the day before it had been decreed that Betty van der Velde should become his wife.

Then did Jan, looking up at the white bed-curtain, heave a rebellious sigh; but the next instant he turned over to the other side and calmly went to sleep again.

v

THE betrothal day had come and gone. Mynheer van der Velde's house had been

thrown open on that occasion,—if one can apply so violent a term to the serious ceremony. Fat Mynheers and buxom Mevrouws, besides sons and daughters of various shapes, had, with staid demeanor, congratulated the happy couple.

Mistress Betty, in her blue brocaded gown, with the yellow satin petticoat, looked demurely satisfied out of her brown eyes, calm and quiet and fair—just the ideal of a Dutch maiden, as she leant back in the high-backed chair, while Mynbeer Jan, who stood at her side rather listlessly, wore a look of unconcern, nay, quiet indifference, which was felt to be highly proper under every circumstance, and especially the present.

Mynbeer van der Velde, if not much acquainted with that organ called the heart, so much the more understood its neighbor—the stomach.

Rich, sweet cordials were drunk to the health of bride and groom; tarts of magic flavors, with true lovers' knots upon them, stood on long tables; pineapples, brought at great expense from the East Indies, made the Mynheers' mouths water; delicious teas furthered gossip, and there was a certain little room to

which the magistracy of Kitwyk were led by a red-cheeked maid in a white cap, with glistening, golden ornaments hanging down on either temple, where they were given grog and rum, and many another good thing besides.

So Mynheer van der Velde and Mynheer de Lesken were well content, and as the sentiments of the newly betrothed were a matter of utter indifference to everybody, bliss may be said to have reigned supreme.

THERE came a mid-autumn day when the apple-trees near the counting-house knocked with ripened fruit against the little windows; when the flowers were in their last superb glory; when the grapes hung heavy and purple on the vines. The afternoon sun still shone, but there was a chill in the air.

Mynheer de Lesken walked through the long hall in his house, wrapped in half a dozen cloaks, and with his cocked hat on his head. As he reached the kitchen, he slipped in suddenly for a breath of warm air, and at the same time to see if the maids were doing their duty. Mynheer was a housewife at heart; he had a neat turn for cookery and was a connoisseur

in polished copper. As he put his head in at the door, scores of Mynheers were reflected back from the scoured pans and pots that hung against the walls.

Satisfied with the effect his unexpected presence produced, wrapping himself more tightly in his cloaks, the old gentleman directed his steps along the kitchen-garden to the counting-room.

With approving eyes he looked at the yellow pumpkins that had tried, with elephantine playfulness, to grow over the fence of the inclosure; then at the delicate rose-cabbage, the lettuces, the juicy turnips and carrots, which, if not quite in their youth, were not to be despised. Then came the tulip-bed. The gay, flaunting flowers were long since dead, and only a few withered stalks remained. Old De Lesken had no objection to tulips; his grandfather had been a monomaniac on the subject, and he had a great respect for his ancestors. Tulips had also a market value, and were not merely idle sentiment. So Mynheer cultivated them, and felt as if he were patronizing Nature. But now the tulipbed was bare; a chill wind, sweeping by, lifted the fourth of his six cloaks, and gave Mynheer

a humorous poke in the ribs, then, passing on, made the withered tulip-stalks so very conspicuous that Mynheer's orderly soul writhed at the confusion.

At that unlucky moment Jan, with a quill behind his ear, stepped out of the counting-house and, in the supposed sweetness of solitude, gave an enjoyable yawn of the most honest description, when he suddenly caught his father's eyes fixed on him with a look of unmistakable wrath.

"Perhaps you 'd like a bed next to your desk, sir!"

"But, father—"

"Don't interrupt me!" Mynheer cried, growing red. "I have some other things to say to you. It 's enough to—to—to choke with rage to be your father!"

"Father, you—"

"Don't interrupt, sir! Here I have worked myself to death for you, and you're not grateful! I betroth you to a young person of—of—unexceptionable qualities, and you neglect her. Yes, neglect her!" Mynheer cried, quite regardless that Dietrich's wooden face turned to the window, troubled and perplexed.

"Father," said Jan, straightening himself

up, proudly, "you're unjust to me; you have always been so. As you say, this marriage is of your making; you did not consult me. Let that pass, for others are no better off. I suppose you married my mother in the same way."

"How dare you, sir—"

"Father, hear me. I have not opposed your wishes, but you have at least no power to make me love Juffrouw Betty."

"Love! Stuff! Who wants you to love any one? I want you to marry her, that is all. You're to be civil. As for love—d——d nonsense, all of it!" cried Mynheer, quite beside himself.

"I do enough, father. But if you are not satisfied, release me. Juffrouw Betty will not break her heart."

"Why should she break her heart, you coxcomb? But you shall marry her, sir. Do you hear me? Yes, you shall marry her two weeks from to day. I swear you shall."

Mynheer gasped furiously, and so shook under his six cloaks, that there is no knowing what he might have done had not old Dietrich at that moment opened the counting-house door, and so become an unconscious lightning-rod.

HAD Jan really neglected Juffrouw Betty?

Well, one could hardly say neglected; he had simply resigned himself to Mistress Betty as to the inevitable.

Once a week he sat in the state-room of Mynheer van der Velde's house, and saw Betty



JAN'S COURTSHIP.

knit with tireless hands, or embroider moral samplers.

She was satisfied, for her day-dream had become a reality.

Passion? Love? Such words were unknown to her. They would have thrown her peaceful little soul into a state of confusion.

So Jan sat dumbly by, and Betty was satis-

fied; only Mynheer de Lesken, in a curious feeling of affection for his future daughter, had let his imagination run away with him, for Jan seemed to all Kitwyk a model lover.

So old De Lesken's angry words fell on deaf ears; for Mynheer Jan continued his wooing with even more than Dutch indifference and tranquillity.

VI

WHAT Mynheer De Lesken had once decreed, was sure to be.

Mynheer van der Velde had consented, and the wedding was to take place in two weeks.

There was no surprise for Mistress Betty, no bustle and hurry and excited consultations. Meyrouw van der Velde had occupied her placid career in collecting her daughter's trousseau, when that daughter was still in swaddling clothes.

The great presses groaned with the weight of exquisite linen, each dozen of everything tied with dainty red ribbons, and the odor of all as fragrant as new-mown hay in an early summer's morning.

Invitations were sent far and wide. The Burgomaster of Amsterdam came,—he was a

Van der Velde, and the most illustrious of his name. There was invited a syndie of Rotterdam, and two from the Hague, and a godly divine from Arnhem.

There came a De Lesken from Amsterdam, who had obtained leave of the city fathers to have the great posts and connecting chains, which extended the whole length of his house, made of silver,—solid silver, while iron contented most people. But he cursed his folly; for, though they remained there as a lasting token of the honesty or incapacity of every Dutch thief, this De Lesken could never go to sleep without the haunting fear of finding them gone. One morning they found him dead at his window. Physicians called it apoplexy; but, really, he was killed by his silver chains.

He was still enough alive to come to Jan's wedding, fleeing from his torture in a lumbering chariot and six; and as he descended at Mynheer's door he shed much glory upon the town.

What a time it was! Such packages as the trekschuit brought! Silver by the ton, by the square yard, and all to burst in an accumulated flash of glory upon the good

town of Kitwyk on the eventful wedding day.

How the sun shone that day! As if it had determined to do something great in honor of the occasion! Van der Veldes and De Leskens came from everywhere: on foot, in unwieldy chariots, and some in sedan chairs.

Mynheer van der Velde's house was hung with garlands inside and out. The state-room was turned into a delicious arbor of flowers, amid which wandered illustrious Van der Veldes in velvet coats, and knee-breeches, and massive golden chains, and Van der Veldes in silken and satin gowns and nodding plumes.

Over the way, Mynheer de Lesken had sworn not to be outdone. He was to give the dinner after the ceremony, and, ah! if you could only have seen the gorgeous plate. Even the De Lesken of the posts and chains raised his eyebrows one eighth of an inch, which is equivalent to a dictionary of the adjectives of ordinary mortals.

The whole of Kitwyk had flocked together before the Van der Velde house: everybody who had a spare moment devoted it to staring at the all important mansion, or at the glass

coach which stood before the door, ready to bear off Mistress Betty to the old church on the market-place, where the Dominie already stood in the vestry, rehearsing his address to the young couple.

Dominie, Dominie, there 's many a slip between the cup and the lip!

As for Mistress Betty, she also was ready. Calm, demure, plump, and rosy, she sat in her room, while about her bustled various illustrious feminine Van der Veldes; one fastened the myrtle wreath, another clasped a pearl circlet about her fair throat, while still another smoothed the rich folds of the bridal dress.

This was the realization of Mistress Betty's most romantic dreams: not marrying the man she loved, oh, no! but sitting here in a gorgeous gown, so lazy and so important, and having every one at her beck and call. Jan, to be sure, was young and handsome, but he was so very odd, his future Mevrouw thought with sincere disapproval. She had even known him to wonder, and Mistress Betty abhorred wondering as much as did her future father-in-law. She had pouted her pretty red lips with as much scorn as her little phlegmatic

soul could exhibit, and if Jan had had even the heavy gallantry of one of the despised young Mynheers, he would have kissed the pout away from the rosy mouth; but, instead, he looked indifferently on and moved not a muscle. So Betty never forgot that he had an uncomfortable habit of wondering, and that he would not kiss her, even with the best of opportunities.

Therefore she sat calm and rosy and contented, without the unpleasant emotion of having her heart beat one degree faster than ordinary.

A model daughter-in-law for Mynheer de Lesken!

VII

CONTENTMENT was enthroned on Mynheer de Lesken's countenance that morning, as he sat in the leathern chair in the sitting-room, doing the honors of his house to his kinsman of the post and chains, who sat opposite to him, tramping quite unconcernedly with one gouty foot—for of course he had the gout,—upon the sacred carpet; a liberty which would have brought down maledictions from Mynheer on any one else.

In one hour Mynheer would have a daughter; a dear, ideal daughter, who could fill a pipe and mix a glass of grog.



DE LESKEN ENTERTAINING.

Jan had, to be sure, a part to play in the coming event, and Mynheer, suddenly overcome by paternal feelings, remembered that, in attending to the welfare of De Lesken of the posts and chains, he had quite lost sight of his son, whom he had not seen since the

state dinner of the evening before. Then, too, the pleasant opportunity of being wise before his honored guest!

"I must see him," thought Mynheer, and rang the bell.

"Cosette, ask Mynheer Jan to come here; I wish to speak to him. A good lad, a good lad," he said to Mynheer of Amsterdam, with a wave of his right hand; "but more like the late Mevrouw than myself," — the most touching allusion he had ever made to his departed wife. Here the door was opened and Cosette's head appeared.

"If you please, Mynheer, I knocked at the door, but no one answered."

"Go back and open the door."

"If you please, Mynheer, I opened the door," said Cosette, reappearing.

"Well?"

"Then I walked in, if you please, Mynheer —"

"What then?"

"If you please, Mynheer —"

"D——n ' if you please, Mynheer!"

"Certainly, if—if you—I—I mean, Mynheer Jan was not there, and his wedding suit was lying on the chair, just as I had placed it last night."

"That 's enough. Go to Dietrich ; perhaps my son is with him. You must know," he added, turning apologetically to his relative, "Jan, I am ashamed to say, is quite absent-minded, and — and — " he stammered, becoming embarrassed as he saw the other's look of horror, "perhaps he does n't know how late it is."

"Not know how late it is any day — and on such a day? Absent-minded — absent-minded? What is the world coming to?" exclaimed he of Amsterdam, in a rich, wheezy voice, that harmonized finely with his gouty foot.

Mynheer felt the full force of this appeal, and was silent ; but his face grew forebodingly red.

A pair of awkward feet shuffled outside on the door-mat. The door was opened, and in came Dietrich, superb in cotton velvet.

"Was Mynheer Jan with you, Dietrich?"

"Yes, Mynheer."

"When?"

"Last night."

"Blockhead ! I want to see him now," cried Mynheer.

"I have not seen him to-day. Isn't he

in his room?" Dietrich asked in some surprise.

"Of course he is n't. What are you staring at me for?" cried Mynheer, in a passion. "Hunt him up! He shall pay for this! He was only born to be a trouble to me — just like his mother. Here, you, Dietrich, send some one to Kobus; perhaps the old fool will know where my son is." And, for the second time in his life, Mynheer stalked about the room in uncontrollable rage, till De Lesken of Amsterdam began to perspire, merely with the fatigue of looking at him.

Mynheer was, however, too excited to be thoughtful. He strode up and down, fast and furious, till Mynheer of Amsterdam, with a celerity of imagination that did him all credit, thought of apoplectic fits, and what not, and grasped the handle of the tea-kettle, that was singing away over the flame of a spirit-lamp on the table, ready for instant use.

Again old Dietrich appeared.

"Mynheer, Mynheer!" he cried anxiously, "Mynheer Jan is not to be found, nor Kobus. Oh, if something should have happened to the boy!"

"Nonsense!" cried Mynheer, in great rage.

"It's only some of his impudence; but he shall pay for it!" he gasped, pulling an immense gold chronometer out of his breeches-pocket, and consulting its staring face. Dietrich shook his head, when suddenly out in the hall a zealous voice shouted, "We've got him, we've got him!" and Mynheer, with a gulp of relief, and a muttered "D——n him!" tore open the door, and discovered Kobus, trying with difficulty to keep Cosette and two enthusiastic men-servants from doing him a bodily injury.

"Where's my son?" cried old De Lesken, looking from one to the other.

"O, Mynheer, Mynheer! I came here of my own accord to speak to you. I must speak to you."

In his agitation Kobus saw neither Dietrich nor Mynheer from Amsterdam.

"Mynheer," he cried pleadingly, "the wedding cannot take place to-day."

"Good God! what do you mean? Is my son ill? Is he — is he dead?"

"No, neither. He is gone."

"Gone! Gone! Where? Can't you find your tongue?" Mynheer screamed, beside himself with rage and consternation.

"Mynheer, it was all my fault, and yet I,

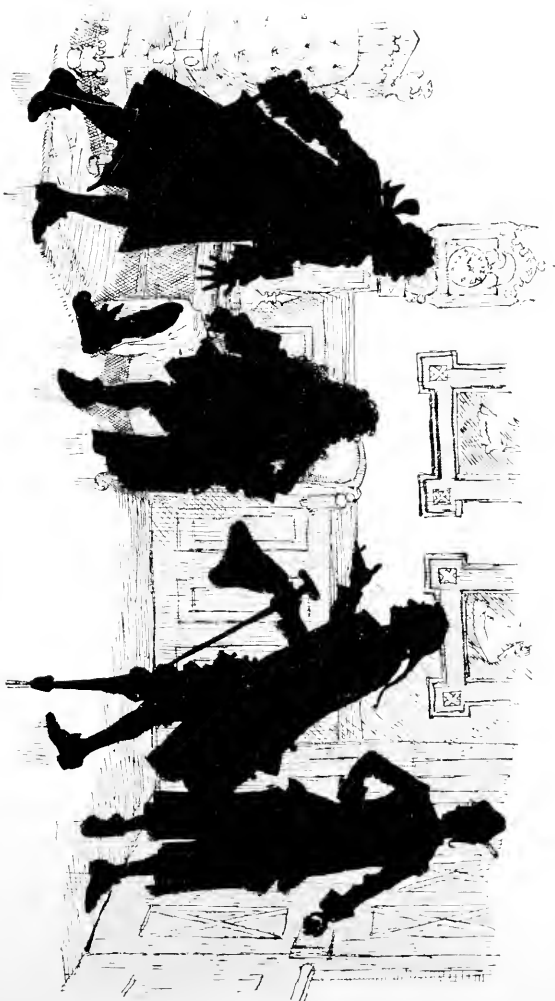
too, was innocent! Be merciful, Mynheer. He had forgotten that to-day was to be his wedding-day."

"Forgotten!" It was all the other three could gasp in their bewilderment.

"He came to my house last night," Kobus said in a low voice. "He often came of an evening, and — oh, Mynheer, I love him like my own child. Be lenient with him!"

"Go on. We're not interested in your feelings," muttered Dietrich, a prey to grief and jealousy.

"We talked of this and that, and at last about music — Mynheer knows how his son loves music," faltered Kobus, "and we quite forgot that to-day was to be his wedding-day. At last I said that I had heard from some one who passed by that the greatest violinist in the world was to give a concert at Arnhem to-day at noon. After I had told him, he spoke of nothing else, and said it was the dream of his life to hear such a master. Then he grew quieter, and soon he went away, quite lost in thought. I have not seen him since. Half an hour ago the miller of Sippken anchored at the wharf, and I went down to him for a bit of a talk, and then for the first time I missed my



ROHUS BRINGS NEWS OF MYNHEER JAN.

boat. 'Some one's stolen my boat!' I cried. 'He's honest!' said the miller. 'What d'ye mean?' said I. 'Why,' said he, 'I saw Mynheer Jan de Lesken step out of her at Sippiken, bright and early this morning.' 'Merciful God!' I cried, 'and to-day is his wedding-day.' 'Then I ran to tell you. Oh, Mynheer, he will come back this afternoon, or to-morrow. Forgive —'

"Out of my sight, you scoundrel!" shrieked Mynheer. "Out, or I'll—I'll murder you!" And Dietrich pushed the bewildered Kobus out of the door and shut it in his face, while Mynheer de Lesken sank into his arm-chair and buried his face in his hands.

Suddenly he started up.

"Bear witness," he cried, "I disown him from this day forth. I have no more a son!"

"Mynheer, Mynheer, think of what you say," and Dietrich laid his faithful hand on his master's arm.

"Silence!" the other cried, shaking him off. "Not another word. I have spoken—so it shall be. Oh, disgraced, disgraced!" he groaned, sinking into his chair again.

"Betty, poor child!" he muttered. Then aloud to Dietrich, "To Mynheer van der

Velde's instantly. Tell him I must see him this moment. Go! Better that he were dead than this, the villain! But I have done with him. Now he can go to the devil! But Betty—poor, poor child! How will it be with her? It will never be forgotten that Jan de Lesken's bride was not worth the scrape of a fiddle!" And Mynheer shivered in his soul-felt disgust.

"Mynheer de Lesken, marry her yourself," said a fat voice, and Mynheer turned about with a start and stared in sheer amazement at his honored relative, who presented in his right eye a very good imitation of a wink.

"Marry—marry—I—marry her myself? Ha! ha! ha!" And Mynheer laughed a furious, bitter laugh. The fury and the bitterness, however, faded away, and the idea remained. The idea was wonderfully enticing. Mynheer leaned back in his chair, and in the silence that ensued, for the second time in his life, allowed his imagination to run away with him.

"I marry her myself! Ha! ha! ha!" But this was a laugh of the deliciously yielding sort. "Why, if she will have me—to be sure, thirty years is—hum! hum! But I'm a *man*!" cried Mynheer, with a self-satisfied slap on his

breast. "If she will only—and I'm a rich man!"

So loose-jointed were Mynheer de Lesken's thoughts, there is no knowing where they would have stopped if, at that moment, Mynheer van der Velde had not opened the door.

"It is very late, Mynheer de Lesken; we must be moving; where is your son?"

"Mynheer, I have no son. For me he is dead. This morning he went to Arnhem to hear a trumpery fiddler, and quite forgot that this was his wedding-day."

CURIOUS questionings went about; eyebrows were raised; little groups of whisperers stood around.

Two hours had passed since the time of the proposed ceremony, yet nothing had taken place; so the illustrious Van der Veldes and the rich De Leskens raised their eyebrows and whispered. Not that they had been neglected—by no means. They had been very well treated, which meant, in the understanding of Van der Veldes and De Leskens, well fed and well wine-d. But they had come for a wedding, and—where was the wedding?

Mistress Betty had been told.

Tears? Yes, tears had been shed; but behind these same tears her common sense was on guard.

What! she forgotten for a mere beggar? Mistress Betty's classification was after the same standard as Mynheer de Lesken's.

She jilted? How her bosom friends would laugh! and, as she thought of that climax to her woes, tears of bitter earnest rolled down the plump cheeks. She to suffer for this insult all her life, and he, the villain, to go scot free? Oh no, no—it must not be!

Then did her father very falteringly offer her Mynheer de Lesken's hand, and, as instructed, lay his old heart and all his riches at her feet.

Tears flowed unhindered down the rosy cheeks, but they did not prevent Juffrouw Betty from calculating in a way that would have done honor even to the kinsman of the posts and chains. A sense of calm and security came upon her; after all, she could, if she only would, be married that day and become a Mevrouw de Lesken. Then must that other De Lesken beware—and through her placid little soul there shot a feeling of hate as strong as it was rare.

After all, a Van der Velde was to marry a De Lesken, and there was the excitement of unheard-of circumstances into the bargain; so thought the old people. All the young girls said they pitied the bride,—though there was not one who would have refused Mynheer de Lesken; and the young men seemed to think that the father of Jan had too much luck.

The Dominie, who had been waiting at the church all day, was hastily notified of the curious change, so that he should leave out of his discourse all objectionable points, such, for instance, as the matter of age.

At last, then, the glass coach started off with the fair bride, and another followed with the bridegroom.

And so the Dominie made them one.

Who cared that the flowers in the arbor began to droop; that the dishes at the state dinner were overdone; that the guests had more the aspect of condoling than congratulating? Who cared? You see, after all, a Van der Velde married a De Lesken, and everything is in a name.

VIII

Yes, young Mynheer was honest, at least.

In the early dawn of the next day, Kobus found his boat again in its usual place.

"Poor boy, perhaps he has come back! God have mercy on him!" thought the old man, sorrowfully. "If I could only see him! O, Mynheer de Lesken, Mynheer de Lesken, if you'd but waited till to-day!"

Never was Kitwyk in such a state of excitement before. Mynheer de Lesken's house was the cynosure of all eyes. Was it surprising, then, that at every sound or noise proceeding from that respectable dwelling, every Mevrouw and Mynheer should stare at it stealthily through the round hole in the closed shutters till there was an unseen line of night caps with frills, brought up in the rear by night caps with tassels, through the whole row of houses opposite Mynheer de Lesken's?

Still, exhausted nature must seek relief, and they were all sleeping the sleep of the just, when some one knocked with the brass knocker against Mynheer's front door.

"Merciful Father, it 's Mynheer Jan!" cried an excited feminine voice.

“Open the door instantly, Cosette,” cried Jan—for it was he. His face was haggard and pale, and his whole appearance was disordered.



JAN RETURNS.

The housemaid proceeded to obey this command with great deliberation. Being a woman, Cosette felt as if she had a personal grievance against this errant bridegroom. The door being opened she concluded, on nearer

examination, that Mynheer Jan was not to be trifled with.

"Cosette, I must speak with my father; has he come down yet? Stay! I will go to his room."

"If you please, Mynheer," cried Cosette, laying a detaining hand upon his arm and speaking with great distinctness, "if you please, Mynheer and *Mevrouw* have not yet come down-stairs."

"Mynheer and *Mevrouw* — *Mevrouw*?" Jan repeated, staring at her in utter astonishment.

"What do you mean? Who? *Mevrouw*? What *Mevrouw*?" he cried.

"*Mevrouw de Lesken*; for, as you did not come, Mynheer your father married the pretty young lady himself," Cosette exclaimed spitefully and triumphantly, in the happy consciousness that she had avenged her sex.

"Married Betty — married her himself? Why," said Jan, with a wild laugh, quite forgetting Cosette's presence — "why, then I don't need to ask his forgiveness—"

Then he laughed again, and, after the manner of men, felt as if he had been shamefully abused.

“Cosette, I shall go to my room and wait till Mynheer and Mevrouw”—with a just perceptible stress on the last — “till Mynheer and Mevrouw come down to —”

“Not in my house, sir. You have no room in my house—you are a stranger here!” a harsh voice suddenly interrupted.

As Jan, with a start, raised his eyes, he beheld his father, enveloped in a voluminous dressing-gown, standing in the middle of the great stairs.

For a moment they looked at each other like two mortal enemies, with emotions too strong for words. Then the violent passion of the elder, made more furious by intense jealousy, spurned control.

“Leave my house, you—you wretch!” he cried, striking the balustrade with his clenched hand. “Leave this house, and let me never see your face again, you man without honor or shame! you disgrace to your name —”

“Stop, father! You are my father, and — Heaven forgive me! — I am in danger of forgetting it.”

“Hold your tongue!” screamed Mynheer. “You have brought wretchedness enough here.”

"I know—I know; I cannot excuse myself; you would not understand me should I try. But it seems you have no reason to complain of the wretchedness I caused."

"What? what? Do you taunt me with trying to hide your disgrace?" Mynheer screamed, leaping down the stairs toward his son, with uplifted arm.

"Beware!" Jan shouted; "beware, Mynheer de Lesken! You have no son, I no father; as you have forgotten, I may forget. We are strangers now, as you wished. Be it so. I have many things to repent of in my life, but my last words to you, which will ever remind you that you had a son, shall be, that I might have been a better son had you been—No, no! It is cowardly to accuse you. Cowardly—cowardly! We shall never see each other again. May you—be—happy!" and Jan, without another word, left his father's house, and closed behind himself forever the spotless front door with its brass knocker. He strode down the silent street till some one came stumping towards him.

"Dear boy! dear Mynheer Jan de Lesken—"

"Kobus, Kobus, never more Jan de

Lesken!" and Jan covered his face with his hands.

"Mynheer Jan, come to my house. All will be well again in a few days," old Kobus pleaded, laying his hand on the young man's arm.

"Never, never, old friend. I must be gone. I must go far away, where no one will ever be disgraced by me again."

The sun broke through the mist of the early morning as the two walked slowly toward the canal, and such of Kitwyk as were already up were rewarded by seeing for the last time Mynheer Jan de Lesken.

IX

Why try to excuse him? It is impossible.

He went far, far away, as he said he would. "Far away" meant, at first, to Amsterdam, and then to Rotterdam; but life was not pleasant in the neighborhood of illustrious Van der Veldes. One day, as he was aimlessly roaming about the great docks of Rotterdam, he thought: "Why not sail away and see if there is a future for you in another country?"

So it came to pass that Jan sailed over the wide ocean to see the world--too late!

Poor, unfriended as he was, he tried to make the best of life. He was a dreamer. The



IN THE ORCHESTRA.

world only tolerates rich dreamers; poor dreamers come to nothing. So Jan de Lesken came to nothing, like many another man. He turned for help to the instrument that had caused him so much misery, but among men who had lived and learned, he knew nothing.

He dreamed his life away, playing here and playing there, barely earning his livelihood.

till one day he obtained a place in the orchestra of the old Wallack Theatre. As the years went on, the feeling of what he had been grew duller and duller, till it seemed a forgotten dream.

But one night, he heard a song.

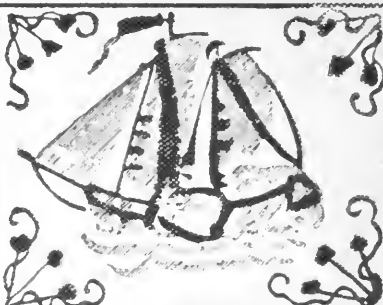
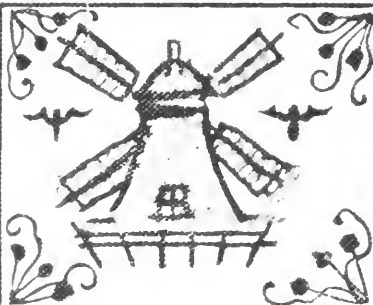
Fresh and strong, the memory of his life's story returned to him; for in this song he recognized a simple melody the great violinist had played the morning of the day, fifty years before, that should have been his wedding-day. Father and bride and friends were long since dead, and he, who had nothing to live for, sat there, where they made people merry for money, and scratched away at his fiddle. Were you ever in the old Wallack Theatre? Did you never see the bent old man in the left-hand corner of the orchestra, who played the violin with trembling hands, or sat there lost in thought? That was old Lesken, once of Kitwyk.

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